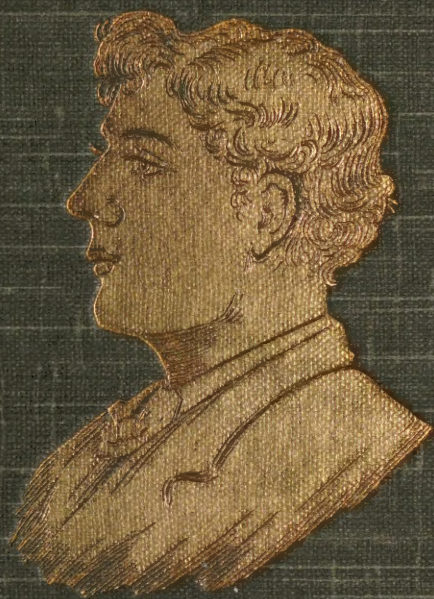
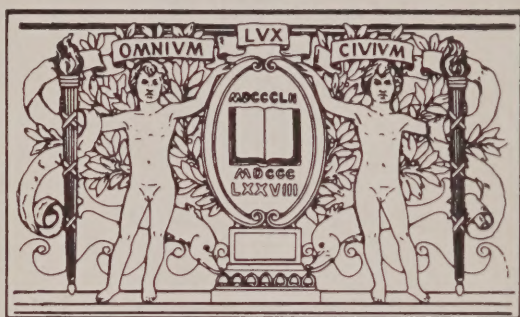


LITTLE PILATE  
AND OTHER SPANISH STORIES





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HE AWAITS HIS FATE.

*See page 81.*

# LITTLE PILATE

AND OTHER SPANISH STORIES

BY

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## FOREWORD

WHEN, on account of delicate health, I had the good fortune to be sent by my Superiors to the College of Orduña, one of my special amusements was to watch my scholars during the hours of recreation. It seemed, however, to bring a sense of unrestful repose to my mind, like the uneasy joy of one who dreads losing that which he is then enjoying; not that unmixed pleasure and happiness which finds an echo of sympathy in the soul, not that simple plenitude of joy which seeks nothing beyond the walls of the college, reveals that blessed childhood of the heart which guarantees to youth the virility of manhood and an honourable old age free from remorse. But beyond the pleasant picture of the present there rose up before my mental vision shadows of the uncertain future—one of our most beautiful, although often sad, faculties is that of foresight or prevision—and I instinctively began to

draw conclusions for the morrow from the evidence of to-day. I fancied I could see the advancing clouds of that sure forerunner of every vice—human respect, the first phantom that will waylay you in the world of human society ; that dreaded spectre of youth, which easily overcomes weak natures, but flies from those who oppose it. I knew how many would probably fall a prey to its influence in the first flush of youth and liberty.

I then remembered a certain Gabriel, at one time a collegian, and I will relate to you a page of his history. Read it and meditate upon it, and when you find yourselves in similar circumstances—for come they will—remember how easy it is to fall. Remember, too, how easy it is to rise again.

I am sure you will like Gabriel as soon as you know him, so I will give here another memento of him which will be most useful. He had carefully preserved in a richly bound album all the letters written to him by his excellent mother. At the beginning of this little memorial of maternal tenderness and prudence, another person, who had a great affection for Gabriel, and who

had at one time charge of his education, had written a few pages, from which I have taken the following passages. Take them as if they were addressed to yourselves when for the last time you leave school and commence on the battle of life.

\* \* \* \* \*

“To-day we must say farewell, and I can say to you, Gabriel, what the Evangelist says of Our Lord: ‘*Infinem dilexit vos.*’ I know your character; I know also the society in which you will one day shine, for in that same society I was myself educated, and in it I lived until I learnt to depreciate it. I have therefore striven to impress upon your heart three great principles which you must never forget, if you desire what God wills you to be in the world—a dutiful son, a worthy representative of a noble race, and a true Christian gentleman. To fulfil this destiny you must ever keep in your heart the holy fear of God and the love of family life, and be always guided by a true sense of honour.

“It is probable that you will be flattered and applauded in the world. Adulation is a delicious poison which little by little turns the mind of

him who drinks it, and ends by making him a simpleton if he be vain, a fool if he be proud. Meditate from time to time upon those words of à Kempis : ‘ Thou art no better for being praised, neither art thou worse for being reviled.’ First learn to know yourself, Gabriel, and then you will know your fellow-men.

“ Preserve in your heart the holy fear of God, as, if suffering and trials come, where shall we look for hope and consolation if we have not kept the Faith of our fathers ? Religion alone can lend strength and sweetness in the midst of pain. Encourage also in your mind the love of home and family ; its tender and pure affection will teach you the truth which should be engraved upon your heart. In the life of man, my son, two women only have a legitimate place : his mother, and the mother of his children. Outside of these two holy and pure loves all others are dangerous rocks, or culpable wanderings from the right path.

“ Be always guided by the principles of honour which is a human daughter of the divine code of the Gospel law. *Noblesse oblige*, says a well-known adage ; to *be* a gentleman you must *act*

as one. Honour is like clear crystal, a breath will tarnish it. Keep yours bright and spotless, even at the cost of pain and life ; in these combats it is the slain who is the victor and he who slays is vanquished, a noble heart is more deeply wounded by dishonour than by suffering.

“ That God may bless you will be my daily prayer. If I have offended you in any way, forgive me ; and whilst you are prosperous and happy, forget me if you will ; but when the hour of trouble and suffering arrives—ah ! then, my dear son, remember me. You will ever find in me a friend who in the Name of God will always be ready to receive you with open heart and arms.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The manuscript ended thus, and was signed with the name of the writer.

You, my dear boys, may substitute the name of any other Father—that of your parish priest or the rector of your college.

Your affectionate servant in Christ,

LUIS COLOMA, S.J.





# LITTLE PILATE

## I

WHAT a handsome fellow Gabriel looked as he stood before his glass, trying to smooth and to bring into order the mass of thick, fair hair which rose in waving curls above his forehead ! His was a head which an artist would have copied for a statue of Adonis or Apollo. In vain did he strive to bring those rebellious curls into subjection ; nature was stronger than art : they rose again, and seemed to form the cushion upon which rested the invisible pitcher of the milkmaid, poised upon his youthful head, so full of hope and trust in the future. Poor Gabriel

. . . life at seventeen has no sad memories, no shadows of remorse ! And he was handsome ! How joyous was the expression of his rosy lips as they parted to smile at everyone who spoke to him, and as though no harsh or unbecoming word had ever passed them ! How pure and limpid, too, was the expression of his large grey eyes, which were as the windows of his candid and innocent mind, which had not yet discovered the thorns amidst the flowers, or spots upon the disc of the sun ! . . . Poor Gabriel, how handsome he was ! . . .

With a gesture of impatience he threw down the comb, and gave up the attempt to bring his hair into the latest fashion. Then he tried to arrange the tiny tufts of his nascent moustache ; this was soon done, and with a laugh and a jump he turned to a much more important matter—he was about to put on his necktie. And what a lovely new necktie it was—of soft blue satin with small white spots ! Gabriel took it up almost reverently, and quite tenderly and respectfully, and passing it round his neck, he carefully tied the bow. He was enchanted with that necktie because it was Our Lady's

colour, and because it was a present from his mother. . . .

The knot was soon made with the inimitable chic of natural and genuine elegance. Gabriel looked at himself again in the glass, and appeared much satisfied ; the spotless collar, sufficiently turned down to show his manly throat, and the pale blue necktie, became him admirably.

“ If my mother could see me now,” he thought, and he blushed without knowing why, “ she would say, ‘ Isn’t he handsome ! . . . ’ And if the fellows at college could see me they would say, ‘ What a swell ! ’ ”

His self-love suggested to him then no deeper ideas, no other aspirations. Gabriel continued dressing, singing the while a favourite hymn to Our Blessed Lady which was always sung in the college chapel during the month of May.

Yes, Gabriel was handsome, and he was very happy. He had already taken his degree of B.A., and was now a student in the University, free in the populous and beautiful city of Seville, absolute master of a pretty set of rooms in a first-class boarding-house, exclusive proprietor of a capital of five pounds, lord of all the fantastic

projects of youth, king of its bright illusions and golden horizons, and, above all, free—free to go out when he would and to come in just when he pleased ; free to stay as long as he liked in any of the cafés and fashionable lounges, or to eat ice-creams every night in the Suizo ; free to canter about on a hired horse among the gay people in the grand promenade of Las Delicias, or to row on the Guadalquivir from Triana to San Juan ; or, again, to assist at the grand services in the Cathedral and at the garrison parades ; and—oh, incomparable bliss !—free to go to all the bull-fights ! . . .

And Gabriel rose on the wings of desire like an eagle released from captivity, making immense circles in the wide expanse of his imagination, never dreaming of anything beyond that might cast down the edifice of his independence or destroy his motto : Liberty without fear, and pleasure without remorse !

For he meant to enjoy this boundless sea of delights, all these heaped-up gratifications, without offending in the least degree the majesty of God, Whose holy fear seemed to be deeper than ever in his soul ; he intended to use all this

liberty and enjoyment without causing the slightest grief or annoyance to his mother, whose happiness was bound up in his own, without tarnishing in any way his honourable name—his name, which had been so frequently honoured for good conduct and application to and success in his studies during the six years of his stay at one of the colleges of the Jesuit Fathers, where he had carried off the palm. It was impossible that University life could change him. Had he not been proclaimed by all the Fathers of the college “Dux” and “model of the school”?

With what sincere gratitude did Gabriel remember those good Fathers who had loved him so much and who had done so much good to his soul! How willingly he had always listened to and followed their counsels and instructions, dividing his time between study, recreation, and exercises of piety! With what candour and simplicity he had frequently said as he knelt at night before Our Lady’s image, as the faithful child he was, and hoped ever to be, of his Blessed Mother: “You see, Madre mia, I am good, . . . and Father Velasco is mistaken!” For you must know, gentle reader, that there was in the college

a certain Father Velasco, who, with regard to the illusions of Gabriel, was ever saying, "Beware, beware!" like the voice of the slave whose office it was to repeat continually to the Roman victor in the midst of his triumph, "Remember that thou art mortal!"

One day Father Velasco called him into his room, and, placing his hand on his shoulder, said to him affectionately but sadly :

"Gabriel . . . you are a good and obedient lad. . . ."

At once the youth raised his head, and his handsome forehead was suffused with a deep blush of pride and self-complacency. But Father Velasco had not finished :

"Your good conduct, however, comes from pride, my dear boy, and your docility is weak and unstable. Your pride will be a danger to you, and your instability will cause you to fall. . . . Avoid, fly from, evil companions and dangerous friends, my son, for human respect will be your ruin. . . . Gabriel, remember Pontius Pilate. . . ."

Gabriel bowed his head, and this time his brow was covered with a blush of confusion and shame at seeing his inmost thoughts so well divined.

He bit his lips, and left Father Velasco's room with the firm intention of never putting his foot in it again. But the good Father kept him always in view, and he never passed him without whispering in his ear :

“ *Pilatillo !\** . . . remember Pontius Pilate ! . . . ”

One day Gabriel was so irritated that he answered rudely. Father Velasco stood still, put his hands in his sleeves, and looked at him from head to foot, then went his way without another word. The angry youth fancied he saw tears in the good Father's eyes as he turned away, and he made a step or two after him in order to beg his pardon. His wounded self-love, however, held him back, penetrating his heart like a subtle poison, and stifling his better impulse.

“ No, I won't ! ” he murmured, stamping his foot. “ He will see for once that I can be firm ! ”

But that night Gabriel could not sleep as usual. One by one the lights were put out in the dormitory, save only the little lamp before Our Lady's statue. Gabriel was restless and wakeful, and in the dim light he fancied he could

\* Literally, “ Little Pilate.”

see the white wings of the Angel of Innocence spread over the large room, and imposing silence on the spirits of evil. . . . All at once he saw the door of his own little cell opened cautiously, and he closed his eyes to pretend to be asleep. Presently he felt some one lean over him gently, then tuck in the bed-clothes carefully, and afterwards make the sign of the Cross on his forehead. . . . Gabriel half-opened his eyes, and saw Father Velasco at his side. . . . An immense sigh seemed to rise from his heart to his throat, and the thought came to him to throw himself at the Father's feet, and beg his pardon. But pride again closed his lips as with a gate of iron, and he pretended once more to be asleep. Father Velasco turned away with a sigh.

From that time the good Father never renewed his friendly warning ; he never repeated "*Pilattillo*" when he saw Gabriel. The latter, ashamed of his disrespect, avoided his presence as much as possible, and it was not until the day he was leaving the college that he ventured into Father Velasco's room.

The Father received him with his characteristic affability ; he bade him good-bye very affection-

ately, and gave him as a keepsake a large photograph enclosed in an envelope. Gabriel had hardly left the room when he opened it and saw a beautiful copy of Titian's great picture of Pilate condemning Our Blessed Lord to death. Just under the figure of the Roman proconsul Father Velasco had written : " Ecce Homo ! . . . "

In a sudden impulse of anger Gabriel tore the photograph in two, and he was going to throw it out of the window. . . . He refrained, however, for it contained the figure of Our Divine Lord, and he thought the act he was about to commit would be a profanation.

## II

Gabriel had finished his toilet. He looked at the splendid gold watch his grandmother had given him on the day he had obtained his first degrees, and found that it was already half-past five in the afternoon.

" Heavens, is it so late ! " he exclaimed as he turned briskly round and took up his hat and the handsome cane with wrought silver handle, which he had purchased the day before. Thus

equipped, he hurried out of the room, swinging the cane gaily in the air. In the middle of the staircase he stopped, clapped his forehead, and rushed back to his room again. . . . He had forgotten two things: the shilling's worth of coppers he always took out with him for distribution among the beggars, and his custom of taking holy water from the pretty little stoup that hung by his bedside.

It was the 27th of May, eve of the Ascension, and Gabriel was going, as he had done each evening of the month, to the Cathedral for the beautiful devotions of the month of Mary.

But before directing his steps to the Cathedral our young hero wished to take a turn or two in the fashionable street called Las Sierpes, a garden of delights more agreeable in his eyes than the labyrinths of Hyde Park, the Bois de Boulogne, or the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. What attracted him to that great centre of the commerce and traffic of Seville was not the continual promenading of people of every class of society, nor the delightful shade afforded in the famous street by the pretty awnings stretched across it in summer, and the perfume

of the numberless plants and flowers grouped about the doorways of the many grand cafés, or hanging from the balconies of every house, and loading the air with their fragrance. That which formed his principal attraction, and caused him to cross and recross the street a hundred times a day, was—the sumptuous display in the shop windows. All that immense show of luxuries and superfluities—for there is no great need of exhibiting necessities—all those brilliant appeals to our pockets through luxury, vanity, and even vice, absorbed Gabriel's attention for hours, and he did not let a day pass without inspecting all those treasures of industry and art, which he somehow considered his exclusive property, and placed there solely for his simple amusement. A hundred times over had he chosen, rejected, and chosen again, the presents that he meant to take home at vacation-time to his mother and grandmother, his brothers and sisters, and even to the servants. On this particular evening he had just discovered an object in one of the shop windows that caused him to break forth into exclamations of admiration and delight. It was a mechanical figure,

which the artist intended to represent one of those terrible creations of the imaginations of mothers and nurses to strike fear into the minds of refractory children. It personified a hideous old man, with great spectacles and an enormous stomach, seated in an arm-chair; between his legs he held a great sack, full of children, dark and fair, whom he took up one by one on an immense fork that he held in his right hand, and, opening his enormous mouth swallowed them whole. By the secret workings of the machinery they came out again under the chair and entered the sack anew, and Gabriel laughed aloud as he watched the performance, thinking at the same time what immense joy he would give to his youngest brother, Luis, if he made him a present of that wonderful toy. He was about to enter the shop to buy it at any price, when suddenly he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and a rough but merry voice greeted him with :

“Hullo, Gabriel, my boy! What, you in Seville?”

Gabriel turned round, and his face became red as a poppy. He opened both eyes and mouth with astonishment on finding himself

almost in the arms of a young man of peculiar type. He was of a very dark complexion, wore his hair and whiskers in the cut of a torero, and his hat on the back of his head, and in the corner of his mouth was stuck a cigarette. His face was that of a gipsy, but his dress denoted an ill-bred gentleman. His whole appearance was that of one of those students who are matriculating in the University, but who spend half their time in the tavern and the music-hall.

“Hullo, Garcia!” answered Gabriel at last, striving to free himself from that unwelcome embrace. But Garcia was not going to let him go so easily; he continued his noisy demonstrations of friendship, slapping him on the back, and exclaiming:

“What a surprise, by Jove! But when did you come, you young rascal?”

“I have been in Seville since the beginning of May,” replied Gabriel, placing both hands on the shoulders of Garcia in the hope of gently pushing him off.

“And what brought you to Seville?”

“Why, to pass the examinations,” answered Gabriel. “I am following the lectures at the

University, and intend to go up for the examinations when it is time."

"Well, that's all right. I'm confounded glad to see you, Gabriel, my boy! But where do you hide yourself that I haven't come across you until to-day?"

"I go to the University, walk in the gardens and the streets; I stay at home sometimes, and sometimes——"

Gabriel was going to add quite naturally "go to church," but a sudden cough cut short his phrase, and getting very red, he asked: "You don't go to the University? I never see you there."

"Oh, I went a couple of days in January to see if I could get a chance of insulting that monkey-faced examiner who suspended me twice running."

Gabriel opened his eyes wide in astonishment, and asked innocently: "How do you spend your time, then?"

"Well, I hardly know. I don't make money, that's certain. Anyone can beat me at that. No one can come up to me at sport, though. By Jove! one must live somehow, and if you

know how to set about it there's plenty of fun going on in this city. . . . You'll soon see, old fellow," he added, shaking hands again—"you'll soon see, if I take you in training, how you'll amuse yourself when you get to know three or four of our men. Where were you going when I came up to you, young rascal?"

Our hero got as red as a tomato again, and looking about him as if to seek some way of escaping, he replied :

"Nowhere in particular. . . . I was just taking a turn before going in to study."

"Let the books go, then," answered Garcia, taking Gabriel's arm in his. "Come along with me, old fellow. I'm going to Tabladas to see the cattle for to-morrow's bull-fight."

"What, is there a bull-fight to-morrow?"

"Where do you live not to know that? Why, Lagartijo and Frasuquelo, the first toreadors of the country, are coming, and the bulls are from Saltillo. . . . Come along, let's go to Tabladas."

And so saying he dragged poor Gabriel, unwilling as he was, towards the great square of San Francisco.

"But I can't go, my dear fellow, I can't go

to-day," said the youth, trying to disengage his arm from that of Garcia. "I must go home to study."

"Let the old books alone, confound it! Justinian and company have invented them to pester future generations. Come along, we shall be back again before eight."

Gabriel had succeeded at last in freeing himself, and, his face on fire with vexation, and tears ready to start, he half-turned away, saying again :

"I can't really ; I assure you I can't go to-day !"

"You can't !" exclaimed Garcia, catching him by the coat. "Are you afraid that I shall hook you to one of the bulls, or is it that you don't like to be seen with me ? . . ."

"No—oh no !" replied Gabriel, more and more annoyed. "If you take it in that sense you'll oblige me to go."

"Why, of course I do. When a friend stands off in that way he's got some motive in it."

"Oh, well, if you are going to be offended, let us go," answered Gabriel.

And vexed, sulky, furious with himself and

Garcia, he followed the latter, while within himself he held one of those dialogues which so often take place between our passions on the one hand, and that mysterious voice sounding in the depths of man's soul, so clear, so inflexible, at times mocking and cruel, but always so just and true.

"Yes, I shall be obliged to go," said Gabriel to himself. "What will that animal say if I don't? . . . That I am chicken-hearted or that I am too proud. . . ."

And the mysterious voice answered with a tinge of irony :

"In exchange for what that animal may say, your good, holy Mother will say that you are her own valiant son, a conscientious student."

"After all," Gabriel went on, not heeding the voice, "there's no harm in going to Tabladas."

"None whatever," continued his conscience. "But then you cannot go to the Month of Mary."

"Ah, but there is no obligation in that, not the least. For if I miss it in church I can make it at home afterwards, so as not to lose the indulgence. . . ."

Strictly speaking, Gabriel was right, and the voice held its peace, but with a sigh.

The two friends therefore continued their way to the great square in order to get a carriage to take them out to Tabladas, the famous meadow in which were exhibited the bulls destined for the morrow's sport in the amphitheatre, and where they might be examined by ardent amateurs.

Gabriel wished to hire a closed carriage, but Garcia preferred an open one, and the vehicle rolled off in the direction indicated. As they passed the magnificent Cathedral, the great Moorish gate of the spacious courtyard of the orange-trees was open, and at the end, towards the left, was visible the exterior Chapel of the Ecce Homo—Our Blessed Saviour with His purple robe of derision, His crown of thorns, His sceptre of a reed, with bowed head, patient and humble. . . .

Gabriel was just going to raise his hat as they passed, but at the very moment Garcia burst into a loud laugh, and, pointing to the colossal statue of St. Peter which adorns one side of the great gateway, began to relate a ridiculous tale of how St. Peter once dropped his great bronze keys on to the head of some old woman and killed her on the spot.

Gabriel did not salute the holy image of Christ as he intended, but as he raised his head to look at it his eyes seemed to meet those of Our Lord, and he fancied he heard from those sacred lips the very words so often repeated by Father Velasco :

“ *Pilatillo ! . . .* Remember Pontius Pilate ! . . . ”

### III

When the traditional gown and cap disappeared from our Universities, the tie that united each family of students and formed them into a kind of brotherhood was broken. The students of to-day have no other feature in common than that which may be infused by equality of rank, education, or nationality. To-day, as of yore, they form parties or groups, but independent of each other, and deriving their union from one of the above-mentioned circumstances, and not from the traditional spirit of fellowship. At times the revolutionary virus of the period unites these heterogeneous elements in some plot or mutiny, or it may be for the signing of some protest ; but even then they are divided,

and more separated than ever by their political opinions, fertile germs of rooted antipathies and party hatred. There are, then, aristocratic students, modest students of the middle classes, and dissolute students. The nominal student of the latter class is a plant which grows and fructifies in the aristocratic casino, as well as in the modest café, or in the low tavern.

Blas Garcia was of the dissolute class ; he was one of those disciples of Themis who do not pay their landlady, who begin by selling their books and end by pawning their clothes ; the terror of quiet neighbourhoods, rioters of the streets, the zealous patrons of gaming-houses and noisy frequenters of music-halls, who think themselves men of experience and who are only vicious youths. Garcia's father was a draper, and he rented the lower portion of the mansion occupied by Gabriel's family, and from this circumstance the acquaintance of the two young men arose. The former, however, had always been accustomed to look up to the latter, and their intimacy had never been great. But absence from their native town seemed to shorten the social distance ; the mere fact of being compatriots often

softens the heart and limits formal distinctions of class. Thus it was that Garcia, on meeting Gabriel in Seville, accosted him with unfeigned friendship, and was quite disposed to constitute himself the mentor of our inexperienced Telemachus, to fathom the pockets of this incautious Croesus, and to give himself airs in the company of an aristocratic friend. For the student of Garcia's class, though always a democrat, never misses an opportunity of proclaiming any friendship or connection which may invest him with the shadow of aristocracy.

It was for this very reason that Blas Garcia had chosen an open carriage; and as he threw himself back upon the stiff cushions he looked about him with the pretensions and ridiculous air of one who, knowing himself to be out of his sphere, tries to appear at ease, and seemed to be saying to the passers-by :

“ Look at me here, with my friend Gabriel Tonseca, the son of a landed proprietor, nephew to two Counts, cousin to three Dukes, and godson of a Bishop ! . . . ”

Gabriel, on the other hand, who, in spite of his innocence, possessed that touch of vanity so

common in youths on the verge of manhood, sat huddled up at the other end of the seat and turned his face towards the interior of the carriage, imagining that no one looked at him because he looked at nobody, just as the ostrich when pursued will hide its head under its wings, thinking the hunter will not see it if it does not see the hunter. Strange illusion, which is not the only one common to men and ostriches ! Our hero was ashamed of his companion, not so much because of what he was as of what he looked, and his mind was tortured between those two alternatives which subjugate the unhappy victim of human respect : “ What would Garcia say if I refused to accompany him ? . . . What will people say when they see me with him ? . . . ”

But to the vexation of one and to the relief of the other youth the fashionable world had not yet turned out in their elegant equipages, and the grand promenade and drive of Las Delicias was as yet deserted. The two friends crossed the place where one was anxious to show off and the other to hide himself without meeting more than an occasional gallant on horseback, or a vehicle crammed with gaily-dressed people

on the way to the practising ground of Tabladas to witness the rehearsal—to a certain extent—of the next day's bull-fight.

The green plain or meadow called Tabladas is on a bend of the Guadalquivir, not very far from the famous promenade of Seville, Las Delicias. The place is renowned for the perfume of orange-blossoms from the neighbouring orchards, and for the above-mentioned custom. Lovers of the sport flock thither to examine the bulls and to discuss their qualities, or to prognosticate their strength and ferocity. The chief toreadors who are to display their skill and prowess against them are there with their attendants and followers, among whom may be seen bearers of some proud title of Old Castille side by side with rough varlets from the slaughter-house. Then there are the minor planets of the profession, with their satellites too numerous to mention, and the motley assemblage of sportsmen of every shade and grade.

When Gabriel and Garcia reached the ground they found a great number of vehicles and people on foot and on horseback, forming a thick hedge and extending in a semicircle to the

river's edge. In the middle, but at a respectful distance, were seven splendid bulls—six for the morrow's fight and one as a reserve—surrounded by a number of herdsmen. The fierce animals were grazing quietly, never suspecting that their hour of doom was so near. Now and again one of the formidable beasts would raise its head and fix its fierce eyes upon the crowd or lash its sides with its tail. . . . At once, as if by enchantment, the circle would widen, and all eyes were turned towards the high-road ; not a few young dandies had even hurried off in that direction. The herdsmen remained in the circle and laughed aloud, and the bull turned its back gravely in its savage majesty and sent up a bellow of greeting to his absent wives in some distant pasturage among the mountains, reminding one of the words of Virgil : “ *Vastu cum gemitu.*”

The picturesque scene enchanted our young hero, and, standing up in the carriage, with both hands leaning on the knob of his elegant cane, which rested upon the seat, he gazed upon the animals, then upon the herdsmen, or again upon the motley crowd, and asked continual ques-

tions, which his friend eagerly answered with the self-sufficiency of an expert, making use of technical expressions that certainly were not derived from his knowledge of the noble science of law. He explained how this or that bull had the best chance in the lists, and prophesied which one would prove no braver than a cow. He then pointed out some of the notabilities of the amphitheatre, who, according to his version, were all intimate friends of his, and whom he constantly met in the principal cafés of the beautiful Andalusian city. All at once Garcia burst forth with one of his favourite interjections, and, jumping out of the carriage, exclaimed :

“By Jove! there goes my friend Desperdicios! . . . I’ll go and bring him here, and we’ll take him back with us. . . .”

Gabriel made a gesture of repugnance, and wished to detain Garcia ; but the latter only half turned his face as he hurried off.

“Why, my dear fellow, it’s Frank Muñoz, one of the first banderilleros. . . . By Jingo ! he’s the sort ! You needn’t be afraid ; he’s all right, you’ll see !”

The instinctive repugnance which the nick-

name of Desperdicios (Prodigal) caused in Gabriel partly vanished when he learned that the bearer was one of the heroes of the profession whom he had often seen crossing the arena—handsome, slight, agile, erect, in a rich costume of silk, velvet, and gold lace—amidst shouts of applause from the spectators. He was quite excited at the thought of seeing that hero face to face, of being able to talk to him and shake hands with him. Such is the charm and attraction of even the traditional dress of a toreador for the young masculine mind. (In Spain these men are of the same importance and renown as the best jockeys in the sporting world of other nations.)

As he waited, however, there passed through his mind the recollection of his mother and a sentiment of the dignity belonging to a true gentleman, and he felt half inclined to leave the place. But how was he to get back to Seville if he left the carriage, and what would Blas Garcia say if he abandoned him in that manner? Gabriel was indignant at what he called his own childishness and scruples, and he rejected the thought, saying :

“ It is not a sin, either mortal or venial, to talk to a bull-fighter . . . or to shake hands with a man who can do such feats of agility and daring. . . .”

As he was thinking thus Garcia returned with a young man of about thirty, dressed in black breeches that were so tight that they seemed to have been woven upon his legs, a wide red sash wound round his waist, a short grey jacket embroidered with black, and a wide-brimmed beaver hat with cord and tassels. His face was shaven except a pair of chop-shaped whiskers, and his hair was plaited into a short tail at the back, which the hat nearly hid. In the left corner of his mouth he held the everlasting cigarette, while from the right he expectorated at frequent intervals with a disgusting noise through his discoloured and uneven teeth.

This personage was Frank Muñoz, *alias* “ The Prodigal,” or “ The Spendthrift,” an insignificant member of a sporting club, who by his appearance might have been a pickpocket, butcher’s assistant, or a ticket-of-leave man. Far from being, as Garcia had said, one of the celebrated toreros of the day, who are to be seen every-

where, and who indulge in every luxury, Muñoz was but a third-rate toreador, grotesque caricatures of the former, one of the vulgar, ill-bred members of the profession.

In the cafés, in the circle of admirers of Garcia's stamp, he affirmed his exploits with stupendous falsehoods. His prowess, however, had never gone beyond the mere act of presenting the banderillas—darts with streamers of ribbons attached—to those whose office it is to stick them into the bull's neck at the great bull-fights. He took good care not to put his foot into the arena when the beast was let loose. In some small country town he had occasionally officiated as torero when the bulls were half-tame oxen.

Garcia introduced his friend with much ceremony to Gabriel, who, turning very red, bowed and held out his hand ; but he hesitated as to whether he should address the new-comer as Frank or Muñoz, Desperdicios or Señor de Desperdicios. The latter touched his hat, spat twice, and with the airs of a lord got into the carriage and seated himself in the right-hand corner, merely observing :

“Glad to see you, friend !”

Gabriel sat down beside him, and Garcia had to content himself on the narrow seat facing them. The coachman drove off in the direction of Seville, and Desperdicios began to criticize the bulls and the whole band of professionals who were to take part in the coming fight. According to his opinion they were a batch of amateurs who knew nothing about the art beyond talking of it in the café and dressing up in the traditional costume.

“Ever since Cuchares died,” he went on, “there has been no one worth speaking of in the profession. He was a torero, if you like ! Such nimble legs, by Jingo ! When he died in Havana they couldn’t find a scar on his body. That man was no woman’s son !”

Garcia listened to him as though he were an oracle, joining in his lamentations. Gabriel heard it all and was silent, for what could he say ?

The carriage reached the city after nightfall, and stopped at the top of the famous Sierpes Street. Each of the young men put their hands in their pockets to pay the coachman. The

deeper Garcia dived into his, the less prospect there seemed to be of finding anything; and after searching in all his, Desperdicios exclaimed :

“ What a nuisance ! Just fancy me coming out with no loose coin in my pockets ! ”

Gabriel, therefore, had to pay the fare, and he then wished to withdraw from the company of the others ; but Desperdicios, who was not to be outdone in generosity—of speech, at least—clapped him on the shoulder, saying :

“ Now that you have paid the coachman, my boy, you must come and take something with me at the Café of the Emperors. . . . They know me there, and we can have what we like without paying ready money. ”

Our young hero blushingly declined the delicate offer. Desperdicios insisted, however, and Garcia added his persuasions. Gabriel, half bewildered and against his will and inclination, therefore followed the two friends into the said café. For what would Desperdicios have said if he had absolutely refused his invitation ?

## IV

The Café of the Emperors, at the time of which we are writing, was a spacious, low-roofed hall, ornamented with vulgar luxuriousness quite in keeping with the tastes of its frequenters at that period. The excitement and animation usual on the occasion of a bull-fight begins in Seville on the eve, and the fact is advertised in the countenances of the multitude quite as patently as on the great placards at the street corners. The great café was consequently crammed with people, among whom reigned the wild animation, the turbulent gaiety, common to all sensual pleasure, so distinct from the calm tranquillity, the serious smile, so to speak, that accompanies the deep and pure joy of the soul.

Gabriel entered the café, furious against Desperdicios, who, with a swaggering air, walked in and out among the tables, thumping the paved floor with the thick stick he carried in his hand, and with Blas Garcia, who thought himself in the height of his glory to be seen with his aristocratic fellow-townsmen Gabriel and his celebrated friend Desperdicios.

As the three walked into the café they were greeted by half a dozen students of Garcia's stamp, and invited to the vacant seats at their table. The latter introduced Gabriel as an intimate friend, taking care to add in an undertone that he was the eldest son of a rich aristocratic family with whom his own was on the closest terms of friendship—in fact, the young nobleman had been entrusted to his care and direction during his stay in Seville.

The other students received Gabriel with the rough cordiality which distinguishes people of little refinement, but our young hero, who by education, temperament, and character detested coarse vulgarity, found himself like a fish out of water in such company. He got as red as a peony at every word they addressed to him, and was quite at a loss what to say in his turn. Garcia had given a tug at his coat-tail two or three times, and whispered :

“ Confound it, Gabriel, wake up, old fellow ! Don't be so mighty particular about manners. You're among men now, by Jove ! ”

Poor Gabriel tried to put himself on a level with his new companions, but only succeeded in

making the distance that separated them still more patent; for among such a class of young men, manners signify everything that is not lounging and yawning, or taking one's ease in the way of posture; and, on the other hand, giving free vent to the corruption of the soul by foul or coarse language, and epithets and vulgar slang.

An incident occurred which aggravated the circumstances in which the unfortunate young man found himself. Desperdicios took out a leather pouch full of chopped tobacco, and passed it round the circle of friends. When it came to Gabriel's turn he declined it, saying innocently that he did not smoke.

"You don't smoke!" exclaimed Garcia, looking at him like a serpent. "Then you'll have to begin!" And, suiting the action to the word, he at once made him an immense cigarette and pushed it between his lips, adding the maxim: "A man ought to smell of tobacco, and not be like a schoolgirl!"

Gabriel singed his nose in lighting the cigarette. He then swallowed the smoke, and coughed so violently that the thing came undone, and some

of the hot ashes fell upon Desperdicios' hand. The latter gave a start and began to swear, at which the rest laughed heartily, and the torero, scowling at Gabriel, put the pouch back into his pocket, saying :

“ You're a pretty water-hen, you are ! ”

But a more serious difficulty awaited our hero. One of the students brought out two indecent photographs, which he had just bought from a man at the door who was selling matches and vile periodicals, and the conversation took such an equivocal and disgusting turn that Gabriel fully understood that he must either demand a change of subject or turn his back at once upon the infamous company. Alas ! for the first alternative he had not the courage, and he could not summon sufficient either for the second. . . .

He cast down his eyes, and tried to close his ears and interiorly raise his heart to God ; but he dreaded the mockery, the laughter, and ridicule of those buffoons, and he did not move from his seat. Conscience called out energetically, gravely, even threateningly. Gabriel tried to satisfy its claims by answering piteously :

“ Presently ; not just now, Dios mio ! They’ll all laugh at me. I’ll go presently, when my departure will be less noticed.”

The interior struggle that was going on in the poor youth’s bosom did not escape the notice of the other students. They looked at each other and smiled maliciously. Garcia came to the rescue of his friend, and began talking with Desperdicios about bulls and bull-fights. The bare-faced falsehoods of the latter soon drew general attention, and Gabriel breathed freely. Little by little the conversation grew decidedly animated, the speakers dividing themselves into two groups, one taking the side of Lagartijo, the other that of Currito Cuchares (two celebrated bull-fighters of the time), with Desperdicios, his disciple, at their head.

“ Raphael Lagartijo is nothing but an amateur !” cried Desperdicios.

“ Raphael is a first-rate torero ; there isn’t another like him !” cried one of his opponents. “ When did you ever see Currito keep up a ten-minutes’ game with the bull like Lagartijo did in Cordova ?”

“ That’s nothing but a picture compared to

what Cuchares has done !” replied Desperdicios. “ Running after the tail of the bull isn’t killing him, by Jove ! I saw Currito one day at Ange-ciras bring down one of the fiercest beasts—a bull from Veragreass—with a cudgel. . . . That’s being a first-class professional, by Jingo ! He brandished the stick two or three times, then gave one blow, and down fell the bull like a fly ! The whole amphitheatre went mad with excitement ; the spectators rose to their feet and cheered him till they were hoarse. They threw cigars, sweets, pigeons, hats, coats, and even the very seats were thrown into the air.”

“ And as there was nothing else to throw up, the police came in and stopped the fun by running some of them in !” interrupted one of the partisans of Lagartijo.

This sally, accompanied with a sarcastic laugh, threw cold water upon the boastful enthusiasm of Desperdicios, and provoked a general outburst of laughter among the group of students. The former, vexed beyond measure, cast his ferret eyes angrily around, and, fixing upon the weakest and least offending of the number, he addressed Gabriel, who, for the sake of doing

something, was looking at him and pretending to laugh, like the rest, in sneering tones.

“Look here, my lad, just tell me what you are staring at me for. Is there anything particular in my face that amuses you?”

The smile died away instantly on the lips of poor Gabriel, the hot blood rushed to his face, and he turned instinctively to look for help from Garcia ; but, unfortunately, the latter was talking to one of the waiters a few paces off, so he stammered his excuses, saying :

“Dear me ; no, sir. I—— As the others were laughing——”

Desperdicios threw his hat back, placed one elbow on the table and the other hand on his hip, and, eyeing Gabriel from head to foot, said :

“Well, if all the others are laughing, it’s no business of yours, my boy, and I’ll have you keep serious. Do you understand ?”

Gabriel’s agitation and confusion had reached their climax, and, not knowing what to say or to do, he cast a beseeching look towards his friend, and called out :

“Garcia ! Garcia !”

But before the latter had time to reach the

table, Desperdicios rapidly changed his tone and manner, and, stretching over to Gabriel, he began stroking his face, and with grotesque grimaces he cried out in a childish voice :

“ Oh, mama, mama ! Don’t be frightened, my little dear ; you’ll rumple your pretty curls ! ”

Gabriel started back in his chair, turned first pale as a sheet, then red as scarlet. A sudden light illuminated his mind—an inspiration, no doubt, of the Evil One. He rose erect to his feet, and with the force of a wild impulse of anger he threw the cup that stood before him into the torero’s face, crying :

“ You villain ! you scoundrel ! What do you think I’m made of ? ”

And those innocent lips, that so frequently had called the Immaculate Virgin his “ Lady,” his “ Heavenly Mother,” now uttered for the first time an impure epithet.

A moment of great excitement and confusion followed. Garcia came hurriedly to the rescue. One or two of the students held Gabriel back, and he threw himself into his chair again, fuming with rage, and smashing the cups and glasses that were near him on the marble table. Des-

perdicios seemed rooted to his seat with surprise and alarm. The lamb had suddenly changed into a lion, and the timid water-hen had shown him that she had the claws and beak of an eagle.

“Come, come, sir ; it was all a bit of fun !” he said at last, changing his tone considerably and holding out his hand to Gabriel, who, however, knocked it back and went on with his furious gestures and angry exclamations.

“Gabriel ! Confound it, lad, it’s only a joke !” cried Garcia. “We’re all friends here. Here, waiter, bring some sherry and some glasses, and some of your best pastry ! This little annoyance must be drowned in wine. Come, boys, let’s be merry !”

The waiter brought a few bottles of sherry and a large dish of tarts and cakes. The rage of our hero gradually subsided, and all the band strove to make amends to his offended dignity. He drank off each glass of wine that they offered him, and peace was re-established. Gabriel poured out a glass for Desperdicios, and the latter promptly returned the compliment. The rest applauded, and all shook hands.

Garcia, in the height of his joy, cried out again :

“ That’s it ! By Jingo, let’s be merry while we can ! Gentlemen, where are we going to finish the evening ? ”

There was a general consultation, during which Desperdicios sent round his tobacco-pouch once more.

“ Let’s go to Mrs. Joachim’s ! ” cried a very determined voice.

Gabriel whispered to Garcia to inquire who that lady might be. His mentor hesitated a moment, and then answered very naturally :

“ She’s a widow who keeps open house and plenty of amusement. You’ll see how jolly it is ! ”

“ Let’s go, then ! ” cried Gabriel, rising first, and under the influence of the wine and his recent anger.

He threw a sovereign on the table to pay for the wine and pastry, and walked towards the door murmuring to himself :

“ I’ll go, I’ll go, even if it’s some vulgar place of amusement, and even if I am to bore myself to death there ! Ah ! they shall call me no water-hen again ! They won’t take me for—— ”

But the word died away on his lips. Gabriel clenched his fists, and, as though he were trying to silence some importunate voice within, said :

“ As if one couldn't be a little friendly sometimes with common sort of people without offending God ! ”

The whole band soon followed, pushing among the passers-by as they entered or left the different shops, disturbing the quieter streets with their shouts, and ringing at all the door-bells as they went along. At last they reached a narrow street with no thoroughfare. They stopped before a very shabby-looking house, the open doorway of which led into a small courtyard—as is the case with most of the houses in Andalusian towns—and before the opening hung a red-and-white striped curtain. As the band of students arrived at the door, an old woman lifted the curtain, and Gabriel saw behind her several young and gaily-dressed girls sitting and smoking in the courtyard. The old woman drew the curtain aside and said in a low tone :

“ Come in, young gentlemen ; you're welcome.”

And they all entered—all ! Yes, all except

the Guardian Angel of Gabriel, who covered his face with his wings and stayed outside the door.

## V

Beautiful Seville, the fair Andalusian city that is watered by the Guadalquivir and perfumed by the scent of countless orange-blossoms, is a merry, perhaps crazy maiden, who cannot forget, nevertheless, the pious traditions of her fathers. Even on the days when she prepares her prettiest gown, her daintiest shoes, her traditional comb, and rich blonde mantilla, to go to the afternoon's bull-fight, hundreds of church and convent bells awake her, before the day has well begun, to invite her to holy Mass and prayer.

How grave, and yet how gay, is the echo of those blessed bells to those who rise with a peaceful conscience, and who answer their loving invitation with a cheerful : " I come ! I come ! " How grand, how solemn, how full of promise, do they sound in the ears of those who rise from the disturbed slumber of trouble and anxiety, wiping away their tears as they hasten to the

summons of the voice that tells them to hope on and trust in God's promises !

But to the stained and sinful conscience, which closes its ears not to hear, but heareth nevertheless, how terrible, how threatening, is the sound of that brazen tongue as it repeats its warning :  
“ Fear, fear ! judgment is near ! ”

Thus must those solemn accents have sounded in the ears of three men, who in the pale light of the summer dawn turned the corner of the narrow street without thoroughfare, and directed their steps in silence towards the amphitheatre. One was Desperdicios, the second Garcia, and the other Gabriel ! Not, however, our gay and smiling Gabriel as he put on the blue-and-white necktie, so prized because it was Our Lady's colours and a present from his darling mother. He seemed another youth—pale, haggard, and his head bowed, his hands in his trousers' pockets, and the collar of his coat turned up, for a sensation of cold seemed to pervade his whole body. The light had gone out of his eyes, and they were sad, like the waters of a lake where the sun never penetrates, for his soul, too, was cold.

The faint rays of the coming dawn found the streets deserted, save by the dogs that roam about in search of offal, and by a few strange beings of both sexes who are never seen in broad day, but who, in all large cities, seem to leave their miserable dens at night, and, like the slugs of the fields, hide themselves again directly the sun appears in the horizon.

Notwithstanding the early hour many women were busily setting up their stalls along the streets that led to the amphitheatre, and the vendors of the traditional batter-cakes, or fritters boiled in oil, were already serving these dainties and the usual glass of spirits of aniseed to groups of people who had come in early from the suburbs to witness the arrival of the bulls destined for the afternoon's sport. It is a custom in many large towns in Andalusia to have a sort of preliminary fight with one of the bulls before they are shut up, and the public are allowed to enter at a very low price. Anyone may volunteer even to enter the lists against the animal—to run the bull, as it is called. The people call this “El toro del aguardiente,” equivalent to the whisky bull, on account of the quantity of spirits

sold and drunk in the amphitheatre on these occasions.

The vast circus was far from presenting the picturesque aspect which it offers at the formal bull-fight, when the hundreds of spectators are dressed in the gayest of colours and the richest of costumes, and the whole place is filled with life and animation. The gaily-caparisoned mules of the picadores in their handsome dress, the stirring strains of the music, all combine to make the spectacle unique. At this preliminary contest, on the contrary, the seats are only occupied by a multitude of men and women of the lowest class. There are the same frenzied shouts as in the afternoon, but more vulgar and discordant. Scores of men walk about among the people with a green bottle and a dirty looking glass selling spirits by way of arousing the courage of the would-be toreros.

Gabriel and his two companions had taken their seats in the enclosed stalls just in front of the barrier. As one of the spirit-sellers passed by with his green bottle, Desperdicios called him forward, saying to his friends :

“ Now, gentlemen, let’s wet our whistle ! ”

And, not content with one glass of the burning liquid, each of them drank three—Desperdicios straight off, and Garcia with grimaces, but Gabriel closed his eyes and swallowed it rapidly, repressing the disgust which the unaccustomed beverage caused him, and as though he were trying to stifle also the violent accusations of his conscience.

At this moment the grooms of the circus began hurriedly to clear the arena, and the two immense doors opposite each other, one under the box of the president and the other towards the outer court of the building, were thrown wide open. A profound silence reigned, and every gaze was fixed upon the entrance door. First came the sound of distant shouts, then the tinkling of cattle-bells, and two minutes afterwards, amidst clouds of dust, the seven splendid bulls destined for the afternoon's sport precipitated themselves into the arena, followed by the herdsmen, picadores, and gentlemen-amateurs—genuine Andalusian types, who would as readily don a herdsman's garb and wield his stout cudgel as wear a frock-coat and flourish a gold-mounted walking-stick. As they entered, a perfect uproar

of shouts, cries, whistling, and blows with sticks and feet upon the boards greeted them, causing the bulls to stay their rapid career, and turn their terrified gaze in every direction, then to disband, but docile, nevertheless, to the bell-ox, their leader, and to the goading of the drivers. They soon disappeared hurriedly through the opposite door amidst the noisy cries of the multitude. One only, black as night, broke away at the very entrance of the stable-yard, and rushed back into the arena, butting furiously at the jackets, shawls, and scarves which the lower row of spectators waved wildly over the barricade. At last he stood still in the middle, and turned his eyes fiercely in every direction, his head erect and defiant, as though waiting for enemies worthy of measuring their strength with his. The drivers on horseback, with their long staves in rest, came galloping back, and with the swift-ness and dexterity inherited from their Moorish ancestors riding in wide circles round the fierce animal. Then came the herdsman bringing the bell-ox, and at the measured sound of the brazen bell the bull, more docile than his human tormentors, bowed his head, went directly to the

side of the ox, and followed him tamely back through the gate into the yard beyond, like a naughty child led home by its mother.

The wide doors were closed behind them, and immediately afterwards numbers of men and boys began clambering over the barricades into the arena, armed with clubs and sticks, old red cloaks, shawls, and scarves. A trumpet then gave the signal, a side door was opened, and the traditional whisky bull was let loose among them. The frightened animal rushed in upon the crowd of human beings, scattering them in every direction, some falling, others rising, and the greater number flying hurriedly towards places of refuge or leaping over the saving barricade to their seats. For a whole hour did that orgie last, in alternations of falls and blows, blasphemies and obscenities, pursuit, fright, and escapes, the barbarity and cruelty of man and the brutal ferocity of the beast, until at length the poor animal, which was an old one and not trained for combat, backed against the barricade in order to face his enemies, who set upon him with sticks and stuck little darts even into his nose for the sole pleasure of tormenting and hurting him. Ah ! how cruel

is man—not the king, but the tyrant of the inferior animals. He will murmur and complain if a tiger devour one of his fellows, and yet he would be capable of devouring the tigers himself if butchers would kill them and sell their flesh as choice meat, or if the managers of the amphitheatre would have their claws cut off, and supply them instead of bulls for the sport of the public !

The barbarous custom and disgraceful scenes above referred to are no longer practised in Seville. The bulls are brought into the city during the night, and they are enclosed privately.

Meanwhile, the various glasses of spirits imbibed by our three friends had produced in each very different effects. Desperdicios did nothing but chatter, the alcohol inspiring him with more than his usual brag and exaggeration ; Garcia lay on one of the benches, undergoing the pains and torments of a thorough fit of drunkenness ; and Gabriel, our innocent Gabriel, quite beside himself, his necktie unfastened and his collar and shirt open, showing a blue scapular and a gold medal of Our Lady hanging from a chain round his neck, shouted and gesticulated in a state approaching that of delirium tremens.

All at once the bull, irritated by the pricking of a dart which had just been stuck into his haunch, made a rush across the arena and tried to take refuge against that part of the barricades under the place where Gabriel was sitting. The President then gave the signal, the trumpet sounded again, and brought out the bell-ox which was to lead away the poor beast and deliver him at last from his torturers. At this moment an incident occurred which is very frequent at these kinds of bull-fights, where every liberty is allowed, and all kinds of insolence and shamelessness goes unpunished. Three of the students who had been the previous evening in the company of our heroes had perceived Desperdicios from their places on the opposite side of the amphitheatre, and, anxious to play a practical joke upon the enemy of their favourite torero, Lagartijo, they set up the shout, "Let Desperdicios kill him! Let Desperdicios kill him!" the moment the drivers arrived to lead away the bull.

The shout was taken up by others, and spread like wildfire through the building. In a moment the crowd of spectators began beating the floor

with their sticks, and shouting : “ Let Desperdicios kill him ! ”

This grotesque ovation exasperated the torero to such a point that he got up, and with oaths and imprecations tried to leave the place.

“ Let some of you fools kill him, by Jove ! May a thunder-bolt fall and do for him ! What next, I wonder ! Do you think Frank Muñoz is going to kill a dummy bull like that ? ”

Gabriel waved his hat and shouted with the rest, and caught Muñoz by the jacket as he was passing ; but the latter shook him off violently, and, trembling with anger, he pointed to the bull, and cried :

“ Go and kill him yourself, you chicken, if you dare ; there he is, waiting for you ! ”

“ I’m a chicken, am I ? ” retorted Gabriel in a fury ; and as quick as lightning he threw off his coat and sprang into the arena. Garcia, aroused from his torpor, tried to stop him, but only managed to seize him by the hat, which remained in his hand. He then staggered after him, but it was already too late ; Gabriel was before the bull, and waving his coat in front of it to excite its fury. The animal lowered its

head, backed against the barricade, tore up the ground with his fore-feet, lolled his tongue and moved his ears, then made a sudden rush.

A terrible shout, a fearful cry, coming from hundreds of human throats, at once rent the air.

Gabriel was seen for a moment tossed high above the heads of the spectators, and then to fall heavily with outstretched arms and open mouth upon the sand of the arena. There he lay, inert as a stone.

## VI

When Gabriel opened his eyes, he found himself upon a narrow bed which was poor but clean. It was closed in as far as the wall at the head with white calico curtains. Gabriel turned his astonished gaze all round, and, on looking behind, saw a black wooden cross hung upon the white-washed wall, and under it a card or tablet inscribed with the number 33. He listened, and thought he heard a heavy, painful breathing behind the curtain on the right, and from time to time a hacking cough sounded on the left. The movement he made in turning his head



"HOW ARE YOU NOW?" ASKED THE NUN.

See page 55.



from side to side caused the bed to creak, and presently the middle curtain at the foot was gently drawn aside, disclosing to Gabriel's bewildered eyes the form of a Sister of Charity. As the Sister came forward, the youth buried his head in the pillow, as though it were an apparition from another world that had appeared before him.

"How are you now?" asked the nun affectionately as she leant over him.

"Where am I?" murmured Gabriel in alarm.

The Sister looked at him with an expression of deep pity, and answered gently :

"You are in God's House—La Casa de Dios—among friends, my brother."

Gabriel started up in the bed, and, catching the nun's sleeve, he asked again, with wide-open eyes :

"Where am I? In the hospital?"

"Well, my son, didn't I say you were in God's House?" and, quietly disengaging herself, the Sister sat down beside him.

"In the hospital! I am in the hospital!" exclaimed Gabriel; and with shame and horror he hid his face in the pillow, and fainted.

Gabriel was indeed in the hospital ; he had been brought there in a litter, and had not yet been identified. Desperdicios had disappeared ; Garcia, still intoxicated, had not realized what had happened ; but, finding himself alone in the arena, he had gone back to the seats and thrown himself again upon a bench, where he was found in the afternoon, still snoring.

When he reached the hospital Gabriel was still unconscious. One of the surgeons examined him carefully, and then turned away, saying :

“ Bah ! more drunk than hurt, I think. Let the lad sleep it out ; but let him be watched, in case the fright should produce any complications.”

The make and quality of his clothes, the whiteness of his hands, and the distinction that was observable, notwithstanding his lamentable condition, in his whole person, made it evident that the young man did not belong to the class generally received into hospitals. He was, nevertheless, put to bed in one of the general wards, under the supervision of one of the Sisters of Charity, and at his first movement she had immediately hastened to his side.

When he fainted again, she applied ether to his nostrils, and presently he opened his eyes and stared at her, then closed them again with a deep sigh.

“Come now, courage! Rouse yourself, my son! This is nothing!” said the good nun.

Gabriel was silent; he remained for a long time with closed eyelids, pale as a corpse and immovable. At last he opened his beautiful eyes—they were filled with tears—and in trembling tones asked:

“Am I dying, Sister?”

“No, my son!” exclaimed the nun, much moved. “This is nothing serious. Only a fright—nothing more! The doctor says you must keep quiet and rest for a couple of days, and then you will be quite well again.”

The poor youth closed his eyes again, and the big tears ran down his cheeks and wet the pillow. The Sister noticed his lips move as if in prayer, and then he seemed to be pressing to his heart under the coverlet something which she could not see. At length, thinking him to be calm and safe, she moved away gently and left him alone. Yes, alone in that poor bed of the

public hospital! Alone with his lost innocence!

When the Sister had left him, Gabriel brought out from under the coverlet his gold medal of Our Blessed Lady, and began kissing it. It was a medal which his mother had had made expressly for him on the occasion of his First Communion. On one side was a figure of the Immaculate Virgin, and on the other the date—December 8—and this inscription: “*Monstra te esse matrem!*” (Show thyself a mother!)

“*Monstra te esse matrem!*” exclaimed Gabriel again and again, bathing the blessed medal in his tears, while sobs and sighs of true repentance—bitter now, but ineffably sweet when pardon is obtained—rose from his heart and choked his utterance.

For two long hours did the unhappy youth struggle with the anguish of remorse and contrition. God offended, his mother grieved to the utmost, his name dishonoured, were the three ideas that predominated in wild confusion in his imagination, mingling the real and imaginary sins—what was certain with what he dreaded, what was humiliating with what was

most terrible, until his poor heart was crushed beneath the conviction of his guilt, as though those three great breakwaters of the soul—God, family, honour—had burst upon him and buried every spark of comfort, every ray of hope, beneath the ruins of sin—ignominy and ingratitude. Then came a gust of the burning, arid wind of despair, inspiring him with diabolical ideas, which the poor youth strove to reject, clasping his medal more tightly, and repeating with touching energy :

“ *Monstra te esse matrem !* ” (Show thyself a mother !)

It frequently happens in these great tempests of the soul, in these struggles of the heart, when imagination augments and embitters our anguish, that a trifling incident, a simple observation, perhaps some distinct and separate trouble, will suffice to turn the current of our ideas and give another direction to our thoughts and feelings, thus destroying the gloomy castles which were raised by that mad enemy of our reason—imagination : man’s joy and torment.

A slight noise of footsteps and voices produced in Gabriel this favourable effect. Little by little

the sounds came nearer; then came a short silence. At last they were distinctly audible within ten paces of his bed, just behind the curtains. One sentiment then took possession of Gabriel's soul, and stifled every other—shame! He hid his face in the pillow, pulled the sheet over his head, and dared not stir. The curtain was drawn back, and there appeared the principal doctor of the hospital, with an assistant and the Sister of Charity.

This was Gabriel's great expiation! His predominant weakness, human respect, which had dragged him step by step into sin, and brought him where he now was, rose up like a phantom before him, and seemed a just punishment for his cowardice, investing the circumstances with such formidable colours and such ignominious bearings that the poor youth felt the hot blood of shame rush to his face, and his heart sink within him with the bitterness of the anguish. He remained covered up in the bed, hardly daring to breathe, pretending to be asleep, and hoping that the gentlemen would pass on without disturbing him. The doctor, however, came close up to the bedside and lifted the sheet,

uncovering the crimson face of poor Gabriel, who, overcome with shame and confusion, dared not look up at his visitors, while the tears slowly trickled down his cheeks.

Moved with compassion, the doctor bent over him, and kindly inquired how he felt. Gabriel, without lifting his eyes, answered in monosyllables. The other gentleman then approached and asked him his name and address, that he might inscribe it in the hospital registers. The unexpected question filled up Gabriel's cup of bitterness; he clasped his hands in despair, and with tears besought them to dispense with this formality in his regard, to let him die in any corner rather than dishonour the name of his noble family by inserting it in the hospital register; for it was by an act of his own folly and sinfulness, and not through poverty and misery, that he had been brought here.

Both gentlemen were touched with pity, and the elder laid his hand caressingly on his forehead, saying, as he smoothed back the curls:

“ Well, well, it is not necessary, my dear boy ! Don't fret, and take more care another time. If you spend a quiet night and feel no internal

injury, you'll be able to sleep at home to-morrow night."

Gabriel eagerly seized the hand that caressed him, and kissed it. His three visitors then left him, and the curtains were again carefully drawn round the bed. Ah! How clearly did our young hero then see, by the vivid light of heavenly grace which humiliation brings with it, his guilty contempt of God's law, his foolish dread of the world, and the blind want of common sense involved in his miserable human respect! How wise and paternal did the kindly admonitions of Father Velasco now appear to him, and how sadly appropriate had his words become—those words which had so often wounded his pride and excited his anger: "*Pilatillo!* . . . remember Pontius Pilate!" For had he not, like Pilate, and worse than Pilate, delivered up his Lord, not for fear of an angry multitude or of the wrath of a Cæsar, but for fear of a little mockery—oh, shame!—from a few dissolute and abandoned youths? To avoid the coarse gibes and derision of those despicable men, had he not exposed himself to the just censure of every well-bred and honourable

person ? Through his false shame, was he not now lying in a public hospital ? And what expiation and sorrow still awaited him ! The bitter grief and reproaches of his mother, the just indignation and blame of all his friends when they heard of that ridiculous yet terrible episode, surrounded as it was by such guilty and ignominious circumstances !

“ How blind I was ! How mad ! ” exclaimed Gabriel, clasping both hands to his forehead. “ The opinions of men can never harmonize, for passion rules their judgments, and the passions are distinct in each ; and in the impossibility of pleasing all, is it not senseless stupidity, blind folly, to prefer the applause and favour of the corrupt and wicked to the approbation and friendship of the good ? To expose myself and to deserve the just censure of good and sensible people, like my dear mother, in order to avoid the undeserved mockery of low and disreputable men like Garcia and his companions ! What a coward I was ! Then I only thought of what those dissipated young men might say of me ; and now what will that good and holy Sister say ? What will that kind old doctor say ?

What will my mother say ? My darling mother will be heart-broken when she hears of the shame and degradation of her son !” And as he went on thus, poor Gabriel wept and sobbed anew until another outburst brought continued self-reproach.

“ What mean and ridiculous infamy to sin through mere human respect ! To sin deliberately, not for the sake of any pleasure or satisfaction in forbidden things, nor even for any gain or profit, but solely through dread of a jeer, a mocking smile ! I dared defy the anger of God, but I dared not face the laughter of men ! Knowing full well, too, that the mockery of wicked men is a sure pledge of the approbation of Heaven ! As though I had never been taught that when the good and virtuous are despised by the world, then they are most dear to the Heart of Jesus !”

These salutary reflections gave him hope and courage ; after tasting the bitter root of sin, Gabriel had found the sweet fruit of amendment and the grace to seek for pardon. His mind naturally turned to the good religious who had been the guardians and instructors of his inno-

cent boyhood, who had prophesied his fall, and with affectionate foresight had taught him the means of rising again. The Jesuit Fathers had a college in Seville, Gabriel knew, but he had never visited it, and he was not aware that any of his former friends and Professors resided there.

“ But what does that matter ? ” he said to himself, with renewed hope and courage. “ Are not all the Fathers filled with the same spirit of zeal and kindness ? Any one of them would receive me with open arms, and give me prudent counsel. Any one of them would reconcile me to my God and help me to console my mother. Ah, my darling mother ! my poor mother ! How grieved she will be ! ” And the poor youth wept on in silence and solitude. Still, his heart was full of hope, and those tears brought peace and comfort to his soul.

At length, towards the dawn, worn out with fatigue and emotion, he fell asleep ; and when the Sister, in making her first rounds of the ward, drew back the curtain, she found him thus, the tears still wet upon his cheeks, but a calm and happy expression upon his face, and the medal of Our Lady clasped tightly in his hand.

## VII

Gabriel did not leave the hospital until after sunset that evening, for he dreaded meeting with anyone who knew him ; and besides, the feeling of guilt made him imagine that people would guess his remorse. It is a common instinct to seek the darkness when one has fallen into sin. With rapid steps he hurried away from the place where he had begun to expiate his fault, and hastened towards the college, in the hope of there effacing its traces. But as he drew near the latter, his steps, he know not how, gradually slackened, his heart beat violently, and a thousand fears and doubts invaded his soul, producing an anxiety and trouble, and a bitterness that dried up all his good resolutions, like the burning sand of the desert which dries up the sap of the plant. How crafty is the spirit of darkness, and with what cunning treason does he lay his most perfidious snare for our inconstant and weak human nature ! His first insinuation is delay, the putting off of our good purpose ; that “ Later on I will do it—to-morrow ! ” which so often ends in never ! By

degrees the necessity for reconciliation seemed to diminish in Gabriel's mind, and he began to think it even imprudent to go to the college at all, or to make known his escapade to a strange Father. It would be better to go home to his lodgings, and make excuses concerning his long absence, and then find out whether the affair had ever come to his mother's ears or not. He could go to Confession later on, to some priest who did not know him. There were plenty of others beside the Jesuits in Seville. "Then again," said Gabriel to himself, "it is already late; the college will be closed; it would be wrong to disturb the Fathers at such an hour!"

This idea completely overcame his resolution; he saw in it a means of conciliating the interior impulse which drew him towards the college with the repugnance to go there, which grew stronger at every step he advanced. A passing cart served him as a pretext for going a longer way round; then he felt obliged to stop and listen to two women who were scolding and disputing, just to see who would give in. Yet, spite of it all, he found himself sooner than he expected or desired close to the door of the

college. To his surprise, it was wide open, and a street porter was resting his heavy load of luggage on a corner of the steps. Mechanically our young hero stepped aside, instead of entering the porch, and passed on ; but at that very moment he was forced to turn back by a common occurrence in the narrow streets of Andalusian cities, and take refuge in the wide doorway. A carriage had just turned into one end of the street, a water-seller's donkey was coming from the other, and the porter and his load was caught between them, causing a block to all passers-by and much shouting and swearing from coachman, driver, and porter. Gabriel waited impatiently for an opportunity to step into the street again ; the noise, however, brought an elderly Lay Brother of the Order to the door, and the latter, on seeing the young man, broke forth into exclamations of surprise.

“ Why, Master Gabriel ! Thank goodness you have come at last ! Your mother had announced your visit to the Father Rector, and we have been expecting you. Come in, come in ! I'll run and tell him you're here.”

“ No, no, Brother Bernard ! ” cried Gabriel in

great alarm. "It is too late to trouble him to come down to-night."

"Not at all. Why, it hasn't struck eight yet. He's in the chapel with the boys, making the Month of Mary. Come in, Don Gabriel. I'll go and tell him directly."

And the good Brother, who had known Gabriel in the other college, almost dragged him off to the great parlour.

Confused and hesitating, Gabriel knew not what more to say; his heart beat violently at every sound of footsteps. All his fear and dread came back; the dryness and bitterness of spirit increased and withered up his good resolutions of the morning. He decided that he would make a formal visit only to the Father Rector, and take leave of him as quickly as good manners would allow.

"It's the best thing to do," he said to himself. "It is more than likely that my mother knows nothing of what has happened, and I may as well keep it from her altogether now. And as to Confession, that will do another day. I'll go in a week or so."

The Father Rector was a long time coming, and Gabriel was tired of waiting. All at once

the distant sound of music reached his ears, the prelude of a well-known hymn to Our Blessed Lady. Every fibre of his being quivered as he recognized the first chords ; his very soul was moved, and his eyes filled with tears at the sweet melody. The organ repeated the first few bars, and all the hardness and aridity of Gabriel's soul seemed to melt and soften ; the clouds vanished as does the darkness of night before the pale rays of the dawn. Presently the sound of boys' voices, pure, clear, and in perfect harmony, was distinctly audible, singing :

“ Venid y vamos todos con flores aporfia ;  
Con flores a Maria, que madre nuestra es !”

(“ Come, let us bring flowers, let us bring flowers to the altar of Mary, who is our own sweet mother !”)

“ Who is our mother !” repeated Gabriel softly ; and his heart seemed ready to break, he knew not why, while sighs and sobs rose to his lips.

Another voice took up alone the sweet strain, in still more perfect tones :

“ Tu poderosa mano defiéndanos, Señora !  
Y siempre y desde ahora a nuestro lado estés !”

(“ May thy powerful hand defend us, O Lady !  
And be thou from this moment ever at our side to protect us.”)

Gabriel was completely overcome ; his emotion found vent in a flood of tears, and covering his face with his hands, he hid his head in the cushion of the sofa upon which he was sitting. In his college days, when he was an innocent boy, he had himself sung those very words at the beautiful May devotions in the pretty chapel, and the memories of those happy days of pure joy came rushing in upon his soul. He tried to repeat the sweet words, but it seemed almost a profanation to him, and he was silent. Those children, however, kept repeating the joyous refrain, as though Innocence were inviting Repentance to unite voices in invoking Mary. “ Venid y vamos todos. Que madre nuestra es ! ” ( “ Let all come to her. For is she not our mother ? ” )

At last, in the midst of his tears, and striking his breast, Gabriel murmured aloud :

“ Que madre nuestra es ! Que madre nuestra es ! ”

“ Yes, thy mother indeed, my son ! ” replied a voice behind him ; and before Gabriel could rise from his seat, Father Velasco threw his arms round his neck, saying affectionately :

“ My son, my son, how glad I am to see you ! ”

“ Oh, do not call me your son now, Father !” exclaimed the poor youth, hiding his face in shame on the paternal bosom of his true friend.

“ Yes, yes, my son ; a child of the Sacred Heart, therefore the son of my heart !” answered Father Velasco, drawing him gently into a private room close by ; and seating himself beside his old pupil, with his arm still round him, he continued : “ Weep on, Gabriel, my dear boy. Am I not here to wipe away thy tears ?”

And Gabriel wept, as though his heart would break, tears of true repentance that wash away guilt, of sincere contrition that purifies the soul. As he wept upon the bosom of his old friend, the bitterness and dread seemed to vanish from his heart, turning his very grief into consolation and sweetness.

“ And what am I to do now, Father ?” he asked humbly, when he had at length related all his misfortunes to the good religious, without omitting the least circumstance or the slightest detail.

“ What are you to do now, my son ?” answered Father Velasco. “ What St. Peter did. ‘ Flevit amare ’—he wept bitterly. He denied his Divine

Master three times, through human weakness, as you, my son, have done, through human respect. And what punishment did his Lord inflict upon him? He did not reprehend him even. He made him no reproach. All He exacted from him was the glory and honour of professing his love for Him three times before the other Apostles. By your sin you have also denied your Lord, Gabriel! Confess Him anew publicly; manifest your determination to serve Him. To-morrow is the last day of the Month of Mary, and we celebrate it in our chapel by a General Communion of all our Sodalists. You shall serve my Mass, and, wearing openly the blue scapular of Our Lady, you must receive Holy Communion before them all."

Gabriel was quite confused by so much kindness and indulgence; he hardly dared look up at the good Father.

"Do you think that a hard penance, eh?"

"Oh, Father! Father!" was all the happy youth could answer.

"Well, then, my dear boy, think no more of the past except to draw experience and profit from the lesson. And now," he added, rising

to go, "you must take your supper and go to rest ; your room is ready for you."

"But were you expecting me, Father?" asked Gabriel in surprise.

"Yes," replied Father Velasco, "I was expecting you, and others also. From our colleges go forth many prodigal sons ; therefore our doors are always open to receive them when they return. They need never announce their arrival, nor wait to knock. The only thing that grieves us, Gabriel, is that many never come back at all !"

"And my mother, what am I to say to her?" Gabriel then asked timidly.

"Your mother will not be more severe than your Saviour !" answered Father Velasco. "I will manage all that for you, my son. When did you write to her last ?"

"The very day on which my troubles began."

"Well, then, it is probable she knows nothing about them, and we will try to prevent her ever hearing of them. Nobody knows you yet in Seville. Garcia is ignorant of your address, and he will be sure to keep quiet on account of the

money he owes you. So go to your supper, Gabriel, my son ; I'll see to all your other business."

Father Velasco left Gabriel in charge of another Father, and he then put on his hat and cloak and went straight to the young man's lodgings. A half-hour afterwards he returned, bringing Gabriel a letter from his mother, written only the day before. The good lady wrote in perfect tranquillity of mind concerning her son, charging him to go and visit Father Velasco, who had just been named Rector of the Jesuit College in Seville.

"That's capital!" exclaimed the Father, as Gabriel finished reading the letter. "With that and a note from me we shall have settled the question and got rid of that difficulty. And a fortunate thing, too, that your landlady's servant hadn't found out the accident ; for, alarmed at your disappearance, she was about to inquire at the police-station, and to write to your mother. Luckily I got there in time to allay their fears and to prevent further mischief." Gabriel pressed the good Father's hand to his lips and thanked him warmly. The latter rose to take his leave for the night ; and opening

his arms once more to the grateful youth, he said :

“ So now it is Little Peter ! Remember St. Peter ! ”

Gabriel threw himself into them, and wept with joy and gratitude.

## VIII

The next day was the Feast of Our Lady of Light and of Grace, and a great festival in the college chapel. Gabriel went to Confession again to Father Velasco, and, wearing his scapular of the Immaculate Conception, he was the first to receive Holy Communion at the collegian's Mass. He spent the day among them, and after dinner took leave of the Fathers to return to his lodgings. Father Velasco accompanied him to the door, and, as he had done when he was leaving the other college, he gave him a large photograph.

It represented St. Peter in the hall of Pilate, and the same hand which had then written under the figure of Pilate, “ Ecce Homo ! ” had written

this time under that of St. Peter, “Flevit amare !”

Gabriel has preserved it in a beautiful frame ; he intends to bequeath it to his children, and he has himself assured us that he never looks at it without tears.



# Peace to the Dead

## I

GLOOMY as an evil thought, strong as a skilful athlete, the old Castle of Valdecoz, perched upon a high cliff, rose majestically above the seashore. Its foundations rested upon the solid rock. The great drawbridge in front of the heavy gates and the tower above overlooked the sea. The tower was surmounted by an enormous eagle holding between its claws a broken escutcheon. That giant of granite seemed in its pride to be saying to the sea, "I despise thee"; to the rocks, "I dominate you"; to the sky, "Alas! I cannot reach thee."

No one dwelt within those huge walls; the

silence of the tomb reigned beneath that roof. The traveller who stood gazing at the broken escutcheon might have easily imagined that the eagle which upheld it had opened its stone wings as if prepared to fly from the place, screeching : " What have I witnessed ! What have I witnessed ! "

The faithful ivy had completely covered a large marble slab, worn by the storm, upon which, under a grating, was inscribed the words : " *Christus vincit : Christus regnat : Christus imperat.* "

As one read that inscription and looked upon those ruins of former greatness, which seemed to be the only records left, one felt that Divine wrath must have swept the power and dominion of human pride and vanity from the old Castle of Valdecoz. The last lord, surnamed " The Bad, " had disappeared while hunting in a forest on the confines of his estates. Three months previously his only son, Ferrant, called " The Good, " had disappeared in like manner, without leaving any clue to his whereabouts.

Time, that solves all mysteries, has handed

down, however, a tradition concerning the Castle of Valdecoz, which, coming down from father to son, has reached us ennobled with the dust of past generations. A tradition which must have originated in the simple faith of bygone days, or perhaps in one of those prodigies which the Almighty sometimes makes use of to awaken repentance in the heart of the obdurate sinner, or to sustain the patience and confidence of the just. We are well aware that these simple, poetic, and at the same time profoundly religious traditions, do not in our day awaken the holy echo they deserve. To be without prejudice is the first law of our century, which prides itself upon its scepticism, thinking thereby to rise to a higher degree of intellectual superiority, and only succeeding in confining itself within the narrow circle of the trivial ideas which are within the power of its comprehension. Though they may provoke the derision of the sceptic, we willingly collect these popular legends, and venerate them as holy relics of the faith of our forefathers. We will narrate them, also, as beautiful examples for imitation in our own lives. Let him who does not believe them deny them if he

will, but let him not on that account imagine himself superior to us who have the happiness of believing and venerating them. Any ignoramus may deny more than a philosopher can prove; and besides, the contemptuous smile of incredulity is too vulgar to be worth our concern.

## II

One October morning the Lord of Valdecoz was returning, at the head of his men-at-arms, from besieging the castle of a neighbouring Baron, with whom he had an ancient feud. The latter was led back captive to his enemy's fortress, and with a haughty spirit—which in times of adversity is often akin to heroism—he awaited his fate; he was to be hung from the great stone eagle, emblem of pride and arrogance, that surmounted the Castle of Valdecoz.

In vain did Ferrant the Good plead with his father for the pardon and release of the prisoner, reminding him that true valour is crowned by mercy towards the vanquished, in the same way

as modesty adorns merit. But for conquerors like the Lord of Valdecoz there is no law but that of Brennus: "Væ victis!" (Woe to the vanquished!) and therefore the compassionate petition of his son was unheeded, and the barbarous sentence was executed. Moreover, the corpse was to hang thus above the great gateway until it became the prey of the vultures.

Ferrant withdrew in horror from the sickening spectacle, and the prayers of the son went up to Heaven in reparation for the blasphemies and cruelties of the father. In the middle of the night the pious youth left his apartments, and with the greatest caution and secrecy mounted to the top of the gate-tower; he then detached the corpse of the unfortunate victim, and carrying it upon his back to the seashore, he there buried it reverently at the foot of the rock.

The rage of the Castellan knew no bounds when he saw that the corpse had disappeared. All the retainers of the castle trembled for Ferrant the Good; but he, tranquil and serene, like the conscience of the man who fulfils a sacred duty,

presented himself before his angry father, and confessed that he was the author of the deed which Valdecoz considered a crime. For a moment surprise subdued his anger, but he soon exclaimed :

“ Miserable youth ! What reason can you give for thus disobeying my orders ? ”

“ As you give death to the living, so would I give peace to the dead ! ” answered Ferrant, with respectful firmness.

“ Peace to the dead ! ” muttered the Castellan, filled with rage and contempt. “ You are more fit to wear a monk’s cowl than a knight’s coat of mail. But you shall not have your wish ; I swear it by my beard. You yourself shall bring back that traitor’s corpse to the place from whence you took it ! ”

Ferrant firmly refused to obey the impious orders of his father, for he knew that parental authority has certain limits, that the law of God does not require submission to cruel and unjust commands. Like the strong but flexible cable that resists the force of the waves, so did the pious youth resist the threats of the wrathful Castellan.

His many crimes had hardened the heart of this unnatural parent; he drove his son from the castle, and vowed he would see his face no more. Ferrant left the home of his ancestors, and wandered alone and destitute; the only treasure he carried away with him was a little flower from off his mother's grave.

But in vain did the haughty Castellan seek to dispel the gloom that took possession of his soul after the departure of his good son. In vain did he try, by war or by the chase, to stifle the voice of conscience. The first sentiment that remorse awakens in the soul is grief at its impotence to undo the evil deed.

One morning, more sombre and taciturn than was his wont, the Lord of Valdecoz went forth alone to hunt in a thick forest at the extremity of his domain. His men-at-arms and his retainers awaited his return from day to day, but all in vain; the Castellan of Valdecoz never returned. They made search for him, but he was not to be found.

Shortly after this it was noised abroad that in the silence of the night sad voices were to be heard in the dark forest, wailing the plaintive

cry : "Peace to the dead ! Peace to the dead !"

Years rolled by—years that in perspective seem like ages, yet in the retrospect how swift appears their flight—and the surroundings of the domain of Valdecoz were changed. The children grew up to manhood, men became sires, and the aged sires of that day had returned to their parent dust.

The bugle-call and the tramp of martial men were no longer heard in the courtyard of the old castle. The watchman on the battlements of the gate-tower no longer blew his trumpet to announce the dawn, the midday hour, and the twilight. Solitary and deserted were those walls, and covered with the plants and weeds that time and neglect produce in buildings, just as age and care produce grey hair and wrinkles in men. The huge pile seemed nevertheless to be under a curse rather than yielding to time and decay. In its solitude, sombre, aged, gradually falling into ruin, and shorn of its former strength, it seemed to beg, like the Wandering Jew, for a speedy death. But away in the forest the same sad voice was heard, complaining, beseeching,

lamenting, as it cried : “ Peace to the dead !  
Peace to the dead ! ”

After twenty years of absence, during which, as a soldier in the ranks, he had fought against the Arabs, Ferrant the Good returned to the domain of Valdecoz.

As he passed through the lonely forest at midnight, the mysterious lament—sadder now than ever—reached his ears. Courageous as he was, he could not help a feeling of terror such as men feel in the presence of the supernatural ; he recommended himself, however, to Our Blessed Lady, and penetrated resolutely into the thicket from whence the voice proceeded.

In the middle of the forest he came upon a large open space, the aridity of which contrasted strangely with the verdure of the surrounding trees and plants, which seemed too horrified to encroach upon that extraordinary circle. By the light of the pale moon Ferrant soon distinguished the awful spectacle of a half-decomposed corpse ! The eyes were wide open, as though the dead had something to beg of the living ! Possessed by a feeling of religious awe, Ferrant approached still nearer ; as he did so he

gave a terrible shriek—he had recognized in that repulsive corpse his own father !

When the first transport of surprise and grief had abated, Ferrant tried with his battle-axe to open a grave in which to inter the dead man ; but the earth—hard as the heart of the Castellan had been in life, dry as had been his eyes at the pleadings of his victims, repellent as his hand had ever been to those in misfortune—was as impenetrable to the steel as a rock of solid marble. The earth denied a tomb in its bosom to the Castellan of Valdecoz ! Ferrant recognized there, in the hand of God chastizing thus, the impiety and tyranny of men.

But that impious man was his father, and the dutiful son prayed and besought mercy and pardon for the departed soul. He humbly bent his forehead to the earth—instrument of Divine justice—and prayed with abundant tears that the curse might be removed. Long hours he prayed, and the tears of impetration—tears that wash away the stain of sin, tears that obtain all graces—at length softened the hard bosom of mother earth.

Ferrant saw with amazement and joy that it

slowly opened of itself and made a grave, wherein the pious son deposited the body of his father.

The peasants of Valdecoz from that night never again heard the plaintive cry : “ Peace to the dead ! Peace to the dead ! ”



## I

It was Christmas Eve, and in a sumptuous apartment of a certain palace in Madrid a lady and gentleman were preparing a representation of the scene of the Nativity of Christ. According to an ancient Spanish custom, this representation was not a mere picture, but an elaborate landscape, or rather panorama of Bethlehem and the surrounding country. Mountains and rocks in cork or pasteboard, winding paths and high roads strewn with real sand, miniature fir-trees and tiny forests of rare plants, mud and straw cabins and diminutive cottages, windmills, rivulets of glass, and flocks of sheep and goats graz-

ing peacefully on green sawdust or moss ; shepherds and shepherdesses in wood or clay were descending all the mountain paths loaded with presents of all kinds—fowls, bread, tarts, cakes, baskets of eggs and fruit, for the Holy Child. The most incongruous objects are often introduced to fill up and adorn the striking picture. At the foot of the mountain there is a little grotto, or a rustic shed, in which reposes the Divine Babe on its bed of straw, with Our Lady kneeling reverently on his right and St. Joseph on the left leaning on his staff. The ox and the ass are in the background at a respectful distance ; sometimes there are a couple of soldiers keeping order among the multitude of shepherds who have already arrived, anxious to adore the newborn Saviour. Overhead, suspended by invisible elastic threads, are a number of angels bearing scrolls on which are inscribed in golden letters : “ Gloria in excelsis Deo — Venite adoremus Dominum ! ”

In the case to which our story refers it was evident that an intelligent head and an artistic hand had been at work ; the perspective and the grouping were admirable, although a few of the

incongruities had been retained as a tradition of childhood. Everything about the scene was artistic and rich, all the little figures perfectly modelled, and dressed in good taste. A rich brussels carpet covered the floor of the room, handsome chandeliers of Venetian glass hung from the ceiling, several massive silver candlesticks were placed here and there among the rocks, and with the light of numberless candles illuminating the whole, the picture was most effective. In the distance the Wise Men were already on their way to Bethlehem, and the star that guided them was one of real diamonds. Within the cave another star of equal value was placed, and its soft rays fell upon the heavenly countenance of the Sacred Infant.

The gentleman above mentioned, mounted upon a pair of steps, was placing and arranging the pages and servants, the horses and dromedaries, of the numerous retinue of the three Kings. He was a young man of thirty, whose noble face wore a look of amiable dignity, and he was attired in an elegant dressing-gown. A servant stood at the foot of the steps handing up the personages of the royal cavalcade; the

former addressed his master as “ My Lord Marquess.” The lady seemed somewhat younger, and was very prepossessing. She wore a large white apron over a handsome morning-gown, and, aided by a maid, was placing the various objects belonging to the lower parts of the scenery. The gentleman called her Elvira, and the two servants addressed her as “ My lady.”

As they were both busily engaged at this unusual occupation, they were suddenly interrupted by a loud burst of laughter from behind the curtain of the door at the other end of the room. The Marquess, in great surprise, turned round suddenly on the top of the steps with King Melchior in his hand ; and his wife, equally astonished, let fall half a dozen miniature sheep she was about to fix in their places. At the same moment there burst into the room a handsomely dressed lady in the full bloom of womanhood, and, throwing herself into an arm-chair, she laughingly exclaimed :

“ What a spectacle ! How very admirable ! What a pretty picture you two would make just now ! Quite a subject for an artist wishing to

illustrate patriarchal customs. Philemon and Baucis in their youth !”

“ But how on earth did you get in without being announced ?” said the Marchioness at last.

“ Why, my dear, by the door, to be sure ! But not without a struggle with your bear in livery, who assured me that his lord and lady did not receive company to-day. But I pretended not to hear him, and walked straight upstairs, and I have come just in time to see these old-fashioned parents preparing a Christmas crib for their only son. Where is Alvarito, by the way ? How is it you haven’t him tied to your apron-string, Elvira ?”

“ I have sent him to walk in the park with Fräulein Folck, for I want to give him a surprise.”

“ It is we who have been taken by surprise the first, I think, by your unexpected visit,” said the Marquess.

“ Oh, you mean that I am in the way, no doubt ! Well, have patience, cousin mine ; this is just an opportunity for you to practise the precept of bearing with your neighbour’s little weaknesses. Don’t suppose that I came out in the cold just to go back home without seeing

either of you ; and now I am here, I am not going away again without examining this wonderful production of yours.” And so saying, the lady rose and came near to the pretty panorama, and began examining it in detail. As she did so, she continued her observations in the same bantering tone. “ How pretty, to be sure ! Little shepherds, little cows, and sheep, and fowls ! How very innocent ; and how nicely you have grouped them, Elvira. Come, Alvar, you should get off your ladder, and put on a sheepskin and a straw hat, and, with a shepherd’s crook in one hand and a lamb over your shoulders, get into position with your little son to adore the Infant Christ ! . . . Why, I declare, Elvira, you have actually put your diamond stars to light up the stable and to guide the Wise Men ! . . . Wedded bliss—domestic happiness, has softened your brains, too, I see. Why, you have only worn them once, when you were presented at Court, and now you hang them in company of the ox and the ass. . . .”

“ No, no, cousin,” interrupted the Marchioness, “ I have put them near the Holy Babe in the manger. . . . Could I make a better use of

them than this for the honour of God and for the instruction and pleasure of my child ?”

“ Come, come, Dorila mia, you had better dress up as a charming shepherdess and join your husband, and bring an offering to the Babe . . . a basket of eggs and a honeycomb, or a plate of fresh butter ; how very interesting and primitive, to be sure. . . .”

“ If you like to come and join us this evening,” said the Marquess, “ you can play the tambourine while we make the offering.”

“ I think you’ll have to do it all yourself, my handsome cousin. . . . Impolite, ungallant cavalier, not to come down from your ladder to salute a lady ! . . . As for this evening, your Dorila shall not sup on buttermilk and cheese with you ; I have come to fetch her to dine with us on *foie-gras* and turkey *truffé*. . . . That’s what brought me out in the cold to-day.”

“ Are you going to give a *soirée*, then ?”

“ No ; I am going to have a midnight Mass in our little oratory, and invite a number of guests. Won’t you be of the party ?”

These words, spoken quite seriously, produced such a fit of laughter on the part of her

listeners that the lady herself ended by laughing too.

“A midnight Mass as part of a *soirée*!” exclaimed the Marquess at last. “Why, who is going to say it? You or your husband?”

“Oh, my lord and master is not very likely to be at home,” said the lady, with a slight tone of bitterness. “He amuses himself in the Senate, making laws.”

“And his loving spouse amuses herself at home saying Mass, eh?” interrupted the gentleman.

“Well, yes, if you like. . . . Yesterday the idea occurred to me that the novelty of the thing would cause quite a stir in our set, so I determined to send out a few invitations. . . . I was in a detestable humour, too. . . . Just fancy; a lovely new winter bonnet, with a beautiful bird on it, had arrived that morning from Paris; such another was not to be seen in Madrid. I had hardly taken it out of the box and tried it on, when in came all the children into my very dressing-room with a dog—a great setter that their father had given them. The moment the animal saw the bonnet, which I had just placed

upon the sofa—he took the bird for a partridge, I suppose—he sprang upon it, and was off with it between his teeth. I screamed ; the boys laughed, and the servants ran after the wretch. It was only in the stables that they got it back from him, though, and you may imagine the condition it was in !”

The Marquess and his wife laughed heartily at the tale, but the lady went on very seriously :

“ Oh yes, it is all very fine for you to laugh ! It was no laughing matter for me to lose a five-guinea bonnet before I had worn it even.”

“ But couldn’t your milliner make you up a cap out of the remains of the bonnet ?” said the Marquess. “ It would do nicely for the mid-night Mass.”

“ Mind your own affairs, sir, and attend to your Wise Men ; I have nothing to talk to you about now,” answered the lady, and, turning to the Marchioness, she added : “ I shall expect you, dear, to-night at ten. . . . We shall dance until twelve, and at that hour the chaplain will say Mass in our little oratory. I have engaged a quartette of the best singers belonging to the Chapel Royal ; it will be lovely, but the Mass

will be short. . . . After that we shall go to a jolly supper, and then dance for an hour or two longer. All the best people in Madrid will be there."

"But are you speaking seriously, cousin?" asked the Marchioness.

"Why do you ask? Am I talking nonsense?"

"Nonsense, perhaps no," replied the Marquess, almost angrily. "Heresy, yes!"

"What have I said against the Faith, pray, Mr. Theologian?"

"All that is against Faith, Hope, Charity, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance—the three theological and the four cardinal virtues."

"Oh, just listen to him! How well you remember your catechism, my dear cousin!"

"Yes, and am able to teach it to my son."

"What a model of a father! It is a pity my husband does not teach his Lycurgus to my boys instead of giving them great dogs for playthings."

"And if you went to school with them, you would learn not to have midnight Mass in your house as a sort of entertainment."

"Perhaps you will tell me what there is in all that to scandalize anyone."

“And do you think it no scandal to invite people to a Mass in that way, just as you would invite them to a *thé dansant*?”

“Oh, you have changed very much of late, cousin. I remember well when we were in Ireland our grandfather taking us to Lord Grey’s castle for a midnight Mass, and how enthusiastic you got about the solemnity of the thing.”

“And do you mean to compare that family feast—and a model family, too—which begins with a Mass said and assisted at with all the devotion and reverence due to such sacred things, with a Mass which your guests assist at as a break and a rest after dancing, and perhaps to give themselves a better appetite for supper? . . .”

“Go along with you!” said the lady, offended. “I have seen something new this afternoon—a Captain of artillery as scrupulous as a nun!”

“And I have seen something more,” retorted her cousin sharply—“a noble Baroness with the conscience of a trooper!”

As he said this the Marquess inadvertently gave such a smart rap on the top of the steps

with the King Balthazar he had in his hand that he broke the little statue, and down rolled the head to the floor. The annoyance of the gentleman on seeing what he had done was so comic that both ladies burst into laughter.

“There, now, I’m quite delighted!” said the Baroness, giving a kick to the head of the poor monarch on the carpet. “That innocent victim has appeased my wrath!”

“What do I care for your wrath?” shouted the Marquess, exasperated at the laughter of the lady. “One thing I know is, that neither myself nor my wife, nor anyone in my house, shall come near your midnight Mass to-night! . . . It is an irreverence, a profanation, almost a sacrilege; and if the Vicar-General of Madrid hears of it he’ll be ready to excommunicate you. . . . It’s a pity there’s no Inquisition nowadays; you and your guests would have to do penance in the streets of Madrid. A nice set of Catholics you are!”

“But, my dear Alvar,” exclaimed the Marchioness, alarmed at the serious turn the talk was taking, “do be quiet, and say no more about it!”

“ I am not going to hold my tongue. The devil is in some women !”

“ You are quite mistaken there !” screamed the Baroness, pale with rage. “ I have never seen a picture of a she-devil. His Satanic Majesty is always represented as a man !”

“ Don’t pay any attention to him, Ines,” said the other lady.

“ I never did, to your husband, Elvira,” said the Baroness, turning angrily towards the door, followed by her cousin, who vainly tried to calm her. “ He’d look much better in the garb of a shepherd than in the borrowed dignity of a prelate.”

“ And you will want a new set of brains before you can go in for an examination in theology !” called out her persecutor, as she swept out of the room.

As he got down from his pedestal to search for the head of King Balthazar, the Marquess continued : “ The devil sent her, I do believe. I shall never mend it. . . . The kick she gave it, too, has chipped its nose. That cousin Ines has no more brains than this image ! To think of having a midnight Mass as an entertainment,

just as she would have a comedy ! And the worst of all is, that she will set the fashion, and we shall be having the thing repeated in all the private chapels in Madrid."

The Marchioness soon returned, half serious, half smiling. "Poor Ines has gone off in a terrible rage against you," she said to her husband.

"Let her go to the Senate House and complain of me to her husband : she'll spend her wrath upon him."

"Yes, my dear, but you were really very hard upon her."

"True, I was rather hard, but it's all King Balthazar's fault. I was so mad at seeing him broken and the group that will please the child best spoiled, that my tongue out with the truth for once to her ladyship."

"Just so ; truth always pricks the sharpest."

"Such frivolous creatures as Ines stand in great need of hearing it."

"She is frivolous I know, but she has the best heart I have ever met with."

"But her head is quite turned !"

"And she is very fond of us, Alvar. She has

no one, either, to draw her away from her frivolities."

"That is true, no doubt. Well, what can we do for her?"

"If you like, I could . . ."

"Well, what?"

"Why, I could invite her children to come and spend the evening with our little boy. . . . That would soon pacify her. . . ."

"Invite them, then, and let them come. The poor children will learn out of their own home what no one will teach them in it."

"The Marchioness went off delighted to order her carriage; and her husband, looking after her with an expression of love and happiness, called out: "Stop, Elvira; tell her she can send the dog that stole her new winter bonnet, as well; that will give her more satisfaction still, perhaps."

The lady laughingly answered: "I'll give her your message," and was gone.

The Marquess added to himself: "Women are like devils, when they are not angels, like Elvira."

## II

Christmas Eve was drawing to a close, and the blessed anniversary of the Birth of Our Saviour was approaching, with all the perfume of holy memories which nineteen centuries and more have not been able to efface. The much desired midnight hour was near, which in all Christian countries has its traditions, telling of joy and peace and hope.

In Spain it is called *La Noche Buena*—the Good or Blessed Night. A holy night, indeed, of sublime solemnity in our churches, and of pure joy and gladness in our homes! Blessed night which recalls the scene at Bethlehem long years ago! The sacred strains of the *Gloria* and the *Adeste*, and the joyous carols with which we celebrate the feast, drive away our cares and troubles, and awaken in the coldest hearts holy echoes of childhood, which lift the mind to heaven, there to seek perhaps for lost innocence and to find repentance and pardon! . . . Let us cherish the pious customs of our forefathers; let us engrave upon the hearts of our children, by material representations, carols, and gay

music (in Spain and Italy the people go about singing, and playing tambourines, pipes, and primitive instruments of all kinds), the holy mystery of the coming of the Redeemer ; for the children will one day be men and women, and those sacred impressions will return, even after long years of forgetfulness and sin, and they will come back to their Saviour, who once smiled upon them in the Christmas Crib, and who is now waiting to pardon them on Calvary. The child of to-day sings a joyous carol before the holy manger, and the remembrance of those days of piety and innocence will bring the man of later years with tears of repentance to the Cross of his Redeemer. Lope de Vega says in one of his soliloquies :

“ When I was a child my delight was to contemplate Thee, O my God ! in the arms of Thy blessed Mother. Now that I am a man, and a sinner who has broken Thy commandments, I dare not seek Thee in the holy manger ; I go to Thee nailed to the Cross whereon Thou didst die for my salvation.”

This was the great work which, without perfectly understanding its immense importance,

## 106 PILLOW OF THE INFANT JESUS

the good Marchioness believed to be part of her maternal duty, and she tried to instil the holy lesson into the mind of her only son Alvarito.

The child was preparing to go to bed at his usual hour on this very Christmas Eve, and his mother had just made him say his prayers at her knee. She was scolding him gently, too, for some little act of rebellion towards his governess, but when he began to cry and promise greater obedience, she kissed him and told him that it was now *La Noche Buena*, and that at twelve o'clock that night the Infant Jesus was coming down from heaven to save the world, and to bring thousands of packets of sweets for good children, and at least four great waggon-loads of toys which the angels keep among the golden clouds, and distribute on Christmas morning. On hearing this, the child's face beamed with joy, he clapped his hands and shouted with delight, and wished it were already time for the angels to come. His mother added that another poor little babe was coming to their house that night—a brother to the Holy Babe of Bethlehem, and of all good children, and therefore Alvarito's brother too ; but this poor little baby

had no sweets, no toys, no pretty clothes, or nice home, and no loving mamma or kind papa to give him presents. And so the poor little one did nothing but cry all the day long. Alvarito grew very grave as he listened, and presently the tears came to his eyes, as with tender expressions of pity he promised to give the unfortunate child three tarts and two packets of sweets, a pretty hat with feathers, one of his best horses, and a big carriage: "Big, big, like the one papa has when he goes to see the King, mamma. . . ." The good mother praised and caressed her little son, and then told him to make haste and go to sleep, or he would never wake when it was time to go and see that beautiful sight of the birth of the Holy Child in the stable at Bethlehem. She laid him in his little bed, and very soon the weary eyelids drooped, and the happy child was dreaming golden dreams such as only innocence knows.

Meanwhile the Baroness's children and a few other relatives and friends arrived, and throughout the mansion, from the drawing-room to the kitchen, there reigned a joyous animation peculiar to that sacred night. One guest, however

(who was in that house considered the most important one), had not yet appeared. Every Christmas Eve this guest was invited. At half-past eleven a carriage drove up to the door of the mansion. Fräulein Folck was the first to alight, then she assisted an aged woman, very poorly clad, out of the carriage. The latter carried under her shabby cloak a large bundle.

The Marquess, his wife, and all their guests came out into the hall to receive the strange visitor. The old woman then opened the cloak, and amidst the profound silence of the spectators, she placed a young infant wrapped in the poorest of swaddling clothes in the arms of the Marchioness. This was the poor child of whom the good mother spoke when talking to her little son about the mystery of the Nativity. This poor infant was the Christ-Child's brother, who every year came to that noble house to perpetuate a holy custom, which for three centuries had drawn down the blessings of Heaven upon the family. . . .

A noble lady of their ancestors had introduced the pious custom at the end of the fifteenth century, and her descendants had kept it intact.

The Marchioness was to prepare everything required for a new-born infant before Christmas Eve, then she was to seek among the poor of the neighbourhood for a baby born of honest parents, and these were to bring it towards midnight to the Mansion of the noble family. It was laid in a beautiful cradle prepared for the purpose in front of the Crib, and then the Marchioness was, in presence of all her family, to wash and dress the poor infant in honour of that Divine Infant who had made Himself poor for our sakes. She and her daughters were to have made a complete set of clothes for the little stranger.

After this the babe was consecrated or offered to the Infant Jesus, and then restored to its parents, together with a handsome present for its maintenance. In the year of which we are speaking the happy chance had fallen to the lot of a little angel of three months old, who had lost both father and mother, and who had no one to support it but an aged grandmother. When the Marchioness took the infant into her arms, she tenderly kissed its forehead, and then, followed by all her household and visitors,

she carried it to the pretty cradle prepared for it.

It was now time to awaken Alvarito. His room was near that of his parents, and only separated by large folding doors from the drawing-room in which the pretty panorama of Bethlehem had been erected. The child had no idea of its existence, and the plan was to open the doors suddenly when all was illuminated, so that the pretty scene might fill him with awe and wonder as well as delight.

The children and servants had each provided themselves with tambourines, flutes, timbrels, or little rustic drums, and had placed themselves behind the scenery; and the Marquess, catching up a tambourine like the rest, went softly into the room where his little son slept, and hid himself behind the curtains: the Marquess . . . ah, noble lords and gentlemen, with your carefully combed whiskers and twisted and curled moustaches, who run from place to place in search of new pleasures which you rarely find; listen to this, and laugh if you will at this noble friend of yours, who finds real pleasures so near at hand, and of such a simple kind—that illustrious

Marquess, who on the battlefield fought bravely against seven assailants, and who, during the revolution, indignantly threw into the face of a traitor general the revolutionary cockade which he offered him ; this same Marquess, as we were saying, was now hiding behind the curtains with an enormous tambourine in his hands, waiting impatiently for the clock to strike twelve on this Christmas Eve, and to be the first to awaken his little son, and to join in singing the simple Christmas carols of our forefathers, equivalent to :

“ God rest ye merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismay.  
Remember Christ our Saviour was born on Christmas  
Day.  
And 'tis tidings of comfort and joy, and joy, and joy ! ”

Alvarito started up in bed and opened wide his eyes with astonishment. “ Noche Buena ! . . . Noche Buena ! . . . ” (Christmas ! Christmas !) he exclaimed, beside himself with joy, and light as a bird he sprang out of bed and ran across the room, through the open doors into the drawing-room, where he at once knelt down devoutly before the Crib of the Sacred Infant. What was passing in the innocent mind of that happy

child ? Perhaps he thought himself in heaven, hearing the angels singing the praises of God ; perhaps he saw the Infant Jesus holding out His arms towards him, for when his mother ran to wrap him in a warm cloak the child resisted, and wished to kneel there still in ecstatic rapture. His father lifted him in his arms and kissed him fervently, but the little one, with tears, cried out : “ Oh, let me stay ! let me stay ! . . . I will never be naughty with Fräulein Folck any more ! I will always be good, and love the dear little Jesus ! . . . ”

When the first transports of surprise and delight had abated, the Marchioness seated herself and began to wash and dress the little orphan in memory of the Holy Babe of Bethlehem. All the children came round to help, one bringing the perfumed water, another holding the tiny garments, and a third begging to be allowed to put on the pretty cap. When the baby was dressed and Fräulein Folck was about to place the pillow in the new mahogany cradle which the Marchioness always added to the other gifts, Alvarito snatched it from her eagerly, crying : “ No, not that one ; give him mine, mine ! ”



ALL THE CHILDREN CAME ROUND TO HELP.

*See page 112.*



And running to his own little bed, the child took the beautiful pillow trimmed with lace, and placed it himself in the cradle of the orphan baby.

The next morning the Marchioness changed that little pillow, and covering it with silk and costly lace, she placed it under a lovely figure of the Infant Jesus that lay in a silver manger over the altar in the magnificent private oratory. To her it had become a treasure, almost a relic.

### III

A year had passed away, and Christmas Eve had returned with the unalterable regularity of time, whose calm finger effaces to-day the joy of yesterday, and to-morrow will dry the tears of to-day. . . .

Many were the carriages that stopped at the door of the mansion of the noble Marquess; servants were moving to and fro sadly and uneasily, and the numerous visitors only entered and came out again. No one was in the sumptuous drawing-rooms to receive them. Sorrow and death seemed to reign in the room of Alvarito,

and no one dared to penetrate therein. The child was dying. His father, that strong and valiant man whose heart was of steel and whom fear had never visited, was now crushed and stricken with grief and dread. He lay prostrate and motionless, except that now and then a nervous shudder and a convulsive sob betrayed his deep emotion. His wife, on the contrary, seemed to find new strength in the very immensity of her sorrow. Apparently serene and energetic, she had not stirred from the bedside of her little son for three days and nights, and now she had him wrapped in a rich coverlet lying upon her lap. Her anxious gaze was fixed upon that pale face, watching for the least movement; but the child lay in a kind of lethargy, forerunner, doubtless, of death. By her side sat the Baroness Ines, beside the empty bed strewn with numberless toys with which they had in vain tried to rouse the little sufferer. At short intervals two doctors entered the apartment, looked at the child, and then turned sadly and ominously away.

At half-past eleven the Baroness took up a glass containing a potent medicine, and kneeling

close to the child, she tried to make him swallow a spoonful. His mother moved him gently, and in tenderest accents whispered in his ear :

“ Alvar ! . . . Alvarito mio ! . . . ”

But the child neither moved nor answered, and his painful breathing seemed like a continuous sigh or plaint. The Marchioness, in deep anguish, spoke again in his ear, this time in louder and more trembling tones :

“ Alvaro ! . . . my darling boy ! Do you not hear me ? Do you not love your mother ? . . . ”

The child opened his eyes and looked fixedly at his mother for a moment, then he raised his little thin hand very slowly, and feebly stroked the pale, worn face that bent over his own ; but in another moment it fell exhausted by his side, and the weary eyes closed again.

The Baroness tried again to give him the medicine, but the child's teeth were tightly closed, and it was impossible to introduce the spoon into his mouth. All hope was gone unless they could get him to take that medicine. The doctor came in again and whispered to the lady :

“ It is useless now ; he will not last more than an hour or two.”

Shortly afterwards the clock began to strike the midnight hour, announcing that the Child-God had come down from heaven to bring peace on earth to men of good will. Slowly and solemnly each stroke sounded in the ears of the sorrow-stricken parents. All at once a strange phenomenon took place in that chamber of death. The Marquess sat up, pale as a ghost ; his wife turned her anxious eyes away from the dying child and gazed with a look of fear round the room ; the Baroness got up, took two or three steps in a vague manner, then stopped and looked in terror all round the apartment. One might have thought that something not of this world had crossed the room, infusing into the persons present that mysterious terror which makes the tongue cleave to the palate, and the hair to stand on end ; that religious awe awakened in the soul by all that is supernatural and miraculous. At the same moment, too, a terrible convulsion shook the frail body of the child, and he cried out distinctly :

“ Mama ! . . . Mama, I am dying, I am dying ! . . . The Holy Child is bringing me my little pillow ! . . . ”

The Marchioness rose to her feet by a sudden impulse, pale and rigid as a corpse, and holding out the child to her cousin, she exclaimed :

“ Take him, Ines ! . . . ”

“ But what are you doing ? ” exclaimed the latter in alarm.

“ Take him, I tell you ! ” repeated the poor mother with energy. And leaving her son in the arms of the Baroness, she went rapidly out of the room, and entered the oratory, where she seized the little pillow belonging to her child, which she had placed the year before under the figure of the Infant Jesus ; then she returned hurriedly, and laid the dying boy upon it.

“ Alvaro ! Alvaro ! ” she cried, throwing her arm round her husband’s neck, and drawing him towards the child’s bed, “ kneel down ; let us pray ! If Jesus does not save him, we shall be left childless. . . . ”

Then a profound silence reigned in that mournful chamber, interrupted only by an occasional sob, and the ever painful breathing of the child. Little by little, however, the respiration became less laboured ; an hour later it was only quick and fitful ; and when day began to dawn, and the pale

rays of the morning lighted up the wan face of the child as he lay like a drooping lily, his breathing was regular and calm, and he slept peacefully.

The elder of the two doctors soon arrived and, after examining the child, asked whether he had taken the medicine. The Baroness pointed to the glass, just as he had left it the night before—intact.

“Well, then,” said the physician in wonder, “it is none other than the Infant Christ Who has saved your child !”

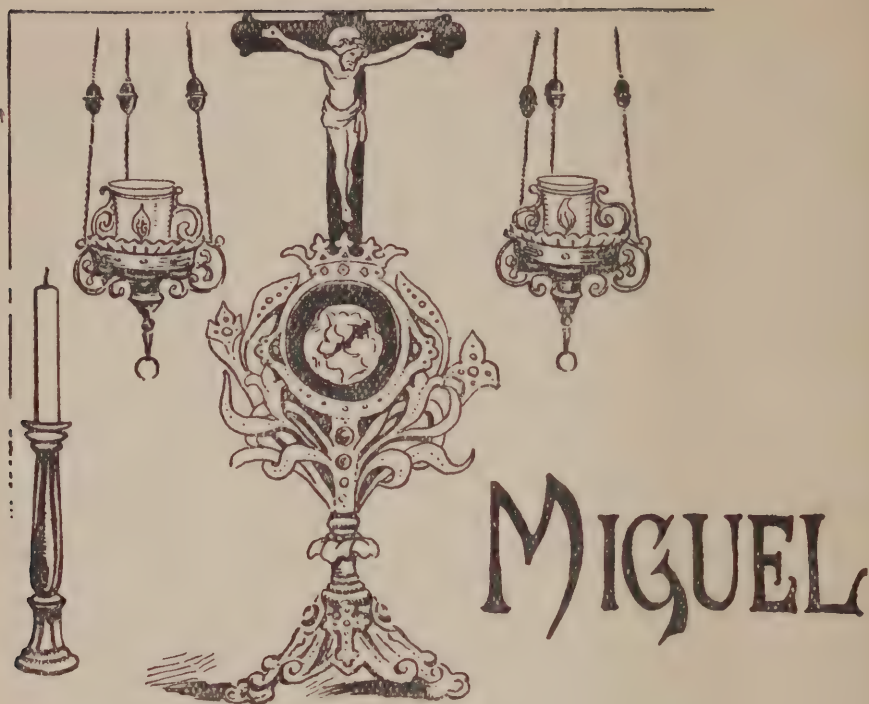
The Marchioness raised her hands to heaven, and what grief had not been able to do, joy now did ; the poor mother gave an immense sigh, half sob, half groan, and fell fainting beside the bed of her little son.

#### IV

That Christmas Eve and morning made such an impression upon the Baroness Ines that she never again dreamed of having midnight Mass in her house as part of an entertainment. She came each year to help her cousin in preparing the outfit for the poor infant, and to arrange the beautiful scenery of the Nativity of Christ, and

made a point of being present with her own children at the performance of the simple and touching ceremony which had become quite a tradition in that noble family.

The Society papers lamented the eclipse of that brilliant star ; but her children and her home were illuminated and warmed by her maternal tenderness and zeal. She was none the less a great lady for being an excellent and exemplary mother ; in order to become a perfect Christian she did not need to spend her whole day praying in church, or to renounce all the duties of her station in life.



“... I HAVE no objection to your publishing this episode in my life, if it appears to you in any way useful. I only beg that you will not embellish my portrait with the delicate touches of your pen. Represent me such as I was and—thanks be to God—such as I am, that those who read may be the more deeply struck with the truth of the words which you one day repeated to me while strolling together at C——: “Nihil longe est a Deo.’ ”

*(Extract from a letter to the author from Miguel.)*

## I

The attention of the intimate friends who were admitted into the private sitting-room of the rich widow de B—— was immediately attracted by a strange object placed at the foot of a magnificent ivory crucifix that hung at one end of the room under a canopy of black velvet. The said object was a kind of reliquary, beautifully wrought in silver, and adorned with splendid emeralds which shed their lovely rays, now in the bright light of the sun, or, again, in the soft reflection of two handsome lamps that burnt on the chimney-piece.

Anyone would have expected to find under the crystal centre of the precious jewel some venerable relic, or at least a holy picture. Nothing was to be seen, however, but an ordinary silver coin, a crown piece bearing the effigy of Isabel II., scratched, and pierced through the middle.

The first time that I saw the extraordinary object I asked myself in surprise what could possibly be its meaning, and so absorbed was I in these reflections while waiting for the lady of the

house that I did not hear her light footsteps on the carpet as she approached.

“ Handsome emeralds, are they not ? ” she said, smiling in a way that proved that she had remarked my curiosity.

“ Magnificent ! ” I replied, somewhat troubled at having been caught *in flagrante*. “ They well deserve to adorn a reliquary.”

The lady began to laugh, but she soon replied gravely :

“ For me that coin is a true relic ; it saved the life of my son, and changed his heart completely. That is why I have placed it at the feet of Our Lord as an *ex-voto*.”

My face at the moment must have betrayed such an evident look of inquiry that my lady-friend smilingly added :

“ When you see Miguel, tell him from me that he must relate the story to you.”

Some time afterwards I sought Miguel and made my request, but I could not get a word out of him. My friend was very philosophical, and answered my questions with the famous sentence from the Koran, “ Speech is silver ; silence is

gold," adding that, according to Rabi Efendi, a celebrated Turkish poet, nature had bestowed on man two ears and only one tongue, to teach him that he should always be readier to listen than to speak. I urged Miguel to satisfy the desire of my two ears by the words of his single tongue, but it was all in vain. It was evident that his Oriental studies had made him distrustful of friends in frock-coats.

When the frock-coat was changed for the cassock, however, he became more confiding, and a few years later he related to me the following story, never suspecting that I should betray his confidence to the public. The epigraph to the following lines was written to me quite recently, however, by Miguel himself, who is now an excellent fellow and father of five children.

## II

In former years Miguel was, in every sense of the word, a wild, dissipated youth, not, however, a libertine who becomes such through his own perverse instincts and depraved ideas; he was one of the many victims which the hypocrisy of

vice makes among inexperienced youth. Led away by evil company, he began by feigning libertinism, in order to accommodate himself to the customs of his companions, and he had ended by becoming as much of a libertine as any of them.

His father, a rich proprietor of Andalusia, had in no way occupied himself about the education and moral training of his son. When the boy was fifteen, however, he took great pride in watching him hunt the hare on a fast mare with all the security of a skilful jockey, or tilt the cows on the farm with the dexterity of a picador in the arena ; or, again, riding through the village fair on a splendid Andalusian colt, in the national costume, to the admiration of the beholders.

The boy's mind and character had not been left uncultivated, however : his excellent mother had guided with tender solicitude the first movements of the heart of her beloved son—those first impulses towards good which receive their being in the caresses of a Christian mother, just as a flower derives its life from the sap of the stem, and of which may be said, in a certain degree, what a Father of the Church has said of the soul :  
“ So great and noble is it, that though sin may

obscure and mar its beauty, it can never efface or destroy it."

Miguel's good mother, as we have said, had infused into the heart of her son a love of virtue, faith as his duty, hope as his consolation, and charity as his joy ; and she had so wisely fostered the child's natural instincts of compassion that they soon developed into noble acts which, considering his tender age, might almost be called heroic.

In a word, at eighteen years of age Miguel was an excellent youth, who loved his mother enthusiastically, preserving in all their freshness and luxuriance the holy ideas and pure sentiments which she had inculcated. Physically, too, he was almost perfect.

His handsome face might have seemed hardly refined enough to figure among the specimens of masculine beauty that adorn our fashion-books, and which form the cream of the elegant youths of our day ; it was, on the contrary, of that genuine manly type which unites natural distinction and refinement to a certain frankness and ready wit, but which, too, if pushed to extremes, may give an air of swagger and impertinence.

About this time his father decided that Miguel should go to study law at Seville ; and the young man, provided with letters of recommendation and introduction to friends and relatives, left home, to his mother's deep regret, for the beautiful city of Andalusia.

Among his many good qualities Miguel had one grave defect, which became the cause of his ruin : an exaggerated amount of self-love and a domineering character. Accustomed as he was to deal only with his inferiors, whom he commanded, and by whom he was flattered, he could not make up his mind to become, in the society he was now entering, a sort of secondary personage, encountering at every step his equals and very frequently his superiors. His having mixed so little with aristocratic society had engendered in him, too, a certain bashfulness and timidity which frequently placed him in an awkward position when he found himself in this new sphere, and which he had not the strength of will to overcome by the apprenticeship through which all young men must pass when they begin to frequent the society of ladies.

One of those slight and often ridiculous in-

cidents which leave so deep an impression on sensitive minds, and which often become the turning-point in a young man's career, upset him completely.

Shortly after his arrival in Seville, he paid his first visit to an elderly Duchess, whom he did not know personally, but who was a distant relative of his father.

The lady received him with the affability and good breeding proper to persons of high station. Very soon Miguel perceived that the drawing-room was filling with ladies and gentlemen who had come to offer their congratulations to the Duchess on the occasion of her name-day ; but the poor youth did not dare take his leave before such a fashionable audience, notwithstanding his desire to withdraw, and in his mental struggle he let the hours slip by. There he sat until the bell rang for dinner, when the Duchess approached him smiling, and said :

“ Of course, you will stay to dinner, Miguel ? ”

Our hero became as red as a tomato, and, neither daring to refuse nor to accept, bowed in silence and followed the other guests to the dining-room. After dinner the company re-

turned to the drawing-room, which soon began to fill again with new-comers, as though all the fashionable society of Seville had there given rendezvous. Miguel was in despair, for, much as he wished to retire, an opportune moment for taking leave of his hostess never seemed to present itself. At eleven o'clock tea was brought in. The Duchess, noticing the young man's embarrassment, came up to him again, and, smiling kindly, offered him a cup of tea, saying :

“ Come, Miguel, do me the favour.”

Miguel wished he could disappear under the floor, like the fairies in the pantomimes ; but, recognizing the utter impossibility, he accepted the proffered beverage, again in silence.

Meantime, it had begun to rain in torrents. The guests retired as their carriages were one by one announced ; and Miguel, who had been waiting since three o'clock for an opportunity to take leave, found himself alone face to face with his hostess, who could hardly refrain from laughing at the sad and ashamed look of her young relative. The poor boy stammered some excuses, but the old lady burst into laughter and interrupted him, saying :

“I cannot allow you to go home alone at this hour, Miguel. . . . It is past midnight, and pouring with rain. . . . You live too far from here, and you do not know the city. I cannot lend you a carriage, so you must resign yourself to sleep in my house, unless you wish to offend me.”

As the earth would not open to receive him, and in the impossibility of escaping by the window, Miguel was forced to consent, though he was ready to cry with vexation.

The kind old lady, with the authority of her superior years and the relationship she bore to his father, gently took the silly fellow's arm and led him herself to the apartment of her son, who was then travelling in Italy.

Once alone, Miguel pulled off his coat, and rushing to the bed, threw himself upon it and buried his face in the pillow, tearing his hair like an enraged child who had been locked up as a punishment.

The following morning a servant came to tell him that her grace was waiting for him to accompany her to Mass in the private chapel, and thence to breakfast. Poor Miguel heard

Mass with very little devotion, breakfasted with still less appetite, and then, as though pursued by the devil, he rushed down the carpeted stairs, through the great hall of the house, where he had come for a twenty minutes' visit, and where he had remained about twenty hours through his own foolish bashfulness. But the climax was waiting for him at the door. The kind Duchess had ordered her brougham to be there, and Miguel was obliged to allow himself to be driven home in state.

This simple incident, the recollection of which would have excited laughter in anyone else, terribly exasperated Miguel's self-love; he, in common with most youths who make their *début* in society, fancied all eyes were upon him, and persuaded himself that he had now become an object of ridicule in the sight of all fashionable Seville. This idea was so rooted in his mind that he determined to avoid for the future that refined society (to which he of right belonged) where a youth may easily lose his virtue but rarely his gentlemanly manners, and to seek the company of friends of low condition among whom he dominated on account of his fortune

and profession, and by whom he was gradually led into all kinds of vice and excess.

Thanks to these friendships, during his first term Miguel became a wild, scapegrace student, a frequenter of cafés and concert-rooms; at the end of the second he was already a dissipated frequenter of public-houses.

### III

Miguel's good mother would now have hardly recognized her once candid and sensitive son in that dissolute, licentious fellow who, with his hat thrown back, a pipe in his mouth, and obscenity on his lips, casting off the yoke of education, and despising even all human respect, wore a well-defined look of devil-may-care insolence. That young man, whose language scandalized and whose manners shocked, who from the café had descended to the tavern, and who, flying from all cultivated society, now sought only that of jockeys and bull-fighters, with whom he was on the freest of terms.

But his virtuous mother had not in vain directed towards religion and virtue the first

impulses of the heart she so loved. Though rotten and corrupt on the surface, like diamonds under a coating of slime, there still lay dormant in the depths of his soul the pure sentiments of his childhood.

While he was being first led away by his evil companions, and afterwards as their leader, Miguel ran blindly on in the path of vice. Nevertheless, he would sometimes stop short suddenly, as though his heart were listening to some distant echoes. He would then seem to enter into himself, and turning his steps backward would seek the solitude of his room, where, without realizing it, he would shed those bitter tears of a soul that desires, but yet fancies she can never have the courage, to break through the bonds of sin with which matter has bound her. For was not his pious mother at that very hour kneeling by the empty couch of her absent son, lifting up her pure hands to heaven on his behalf, beseeching his guardian Angel to hold him back, to whisper words of warning and counsel that might lead him back to the right path once more? Ah, how many straying sons never return to a virtuous life because their mothers do not

pray for them ! How many of these sinful wanderers would become, perhaps, other Augustines if their mothers did but shed for them the tears of Monica ! How many of these unhappy paralyzed souls would go down at last into the piscina of grace if they were not compelled to exclaim with the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda : “ Domine, hominem non habeo ! ” — “ Lord, I have no man to help me ! . . . ”

As to Miguel’s father, he only shrugged his shoulders when he was told of the wild life of his son ; he laughed at what he called his mad-cap tricks, and only wrote to him now and then, with a message for the directors of the amphitheatre about the price of some bulls he was sending for the next fight, or to send him a cheque or two to prevent the youth from having to borrow money.

“ As long as the lad keeps safe in his stirrups,” he would say, “ let him run his race. Let him have his fling. . . . Let him sow his wild oats. He doesn’t want much science, for he has plenty of money. . . . A handsome fellow like him, with the name he bears and ten thousand a year, will marry a Princess when once he settles down. . . . ”

Meanwhile, May was drawing to a close, and the examinations approaching, and Miguel knew not a word. On the rare occasions when he assisted at the lectures he either went to sleep—snatching thus a little rest after the previous night's orgies—or he would amuse himself by drawing caricatures of the professor dressed as a toreador, when he was not reading some obscene novel.

He had a vague recollection that Justinian had made an abridgment of the Roman Institutes, but he was by no means certain whether this illustrious personage had been an emperor, a general, a jurisconsult, or some suburban mayor. The wise old professor, a friend of the family, advised him not to present himself for the examinations; but Miguel, with the insolent audacity which had taken the place of his former timidity, rejected his advice. He sat up for two or three nights, keeping himself awake by drinking strong coffee, and studied over lightly the assigned subjects. Satisfied with this preparation, he presented himself in his turn, quite prepared to make fun of the examiners, or to get up a quarrel if his natural wit or his lucky

star should fail him, or again, if the half-dozen glasses of brandy which he had imbibed by way of precaution—hoping to find in them a certain amount of eloquence—should not produce the desired effect.

The questions put to him were concerning the organization of the Roman family. Miguel, with many intricate arguments and a few flowers of rhetoric, answered that it was composed, more or less, of husband and wife, sons and daughters, and many or few servants. The examiner, hearing him rattle on in this absurd way, curtailed the questions with the desire of getting him through if possible.

“What happened in a Roman family when the father died?” he asked.

“Why, what should happen?” answered our hero in a doleful voice. “All the others were awfully cut up, of course!”

One of the professors began to laugh, thinking the youth was a simpleton; another manifested great indignation because he considered him a scoundrel; but the old one, who took him for both one and the other, addressed him once more, but in sharper tones: “Good. . . . What

have you to say concerning the law ‘Furia Canini’?”

Miguel looked him full in the face, and with the greatest impertinence replied :

“It is the first time I have heard it named even.” And taking up his hat, he made a low bow to the astonished examiners and left the room.

His usual companions were waiting for him at the door, and they celebrated the young student’s insolence with roars of laughter and coarse jokes. The latter, before leaving the University, smashed the tablet containing the names and qualifications of the candidates, for before his own he read, “Suspended.” He threw the beadle’s cap into the fountain because he dared to remonstrate with him, and to celebrate the result of his examination he invited all the band to a spree at a famous tavern, situated behind the beautiful gardens of the city, which was the usual resort of pleasure-seekers of a low type.

On passing through the market he noticed an enormous heap of pumpkins and water melons ; he bought one that weighed over twenty pounds and had it despatched by train, carriage paid,

to his father, with the following inscription :  
“ Fruit of a whole year’s study.”

(It may be necessary to explain here that in Spain the expression used to signify failure at any examination is : “ Dar calabaza ”—*i.e.*, “ to get the pumpkin,” equivalent to our term “ to be plucked.”)

Miguel’s father only laughed at his son’s wit ; his mother wept over the incident in silence.

#### IV

Soon after this event Miguel might have been seen one night coming out of a gambling house, where he had lost all his money except a single gold piece worth two dollars. Notwithstanding this, he walked away with head erect, for nothing could now cast him down or cause him to reflect, and with his hands plunged into his pockets he turned into a long, narrow street, which led to the abode of a gipsy fellow, nicknamed “ Serious,” who gave lessons in comic singing. All at once his footsteps were stayed, his head bent forward in the attitude of listening, and his heart, which never felt the least fear, began to beat violently

with alarm. Sad and pitiful, there had fallen on his ear a wailing sound, rendered still sadder by the silence of night; a pitiful plaint that pierced his soul, filling it with indignation against him who might be the cause of that grief or pain. It was the plaintive cry of an innocent, defenceless, perhaps abandoned, child!

Miguel ran towards the spot from whence the sound proceeded, with the anxiety and eagerness to give relief which charity inspires. Huddled up in a doorway, its little face resting on the bare ground, a baby, only some few months old, was sleeping; it still held in its tiny hand a hard crust that its toothless gums rejected, and spite of the hardness of its cold bed, smiled sweetly in its slumber. . . . Another child, about eight years old, brother to the infant, was crying disconsolately close by it. He held in one hand some lottery tickets—emblems of that fortune which for him was so adverse—and in the other a false dollar, which he kept striking on the stones to try its sound. Both Angels of God, children of our heavenly Father; the one smiling unconsciously in its sleep, the other kept awake by sorrow and fear!

“What is the matter, little one?” asked Miguel with such compassionate interest that his voice trembled. But, without replying, the child continued crying—crying as though his grief knew no consolation, as though there were no remedy for his misfortune, as though his lips dared not call upon a mother for aid because she was no more.

“So young and so innocent, and yet weeping thus!” thought Miguel. “And I, who am guilty, I spend and rejoice! So many without bread, and what I eat does not turn to bitterness in my mouth! . . . Great God, where is Thy justice? . . .”

Thus reasoned the scapegrace, making God responsible for the fault of man; but down in his heart a grave voice answered: “Cease thy murmurings; the justice of the Creator is not to blame, it is man’s perversity. If only those who could did but wipe away the tears that they might, how many less would flow in this sad world! . . .” God has not created the rich for enjoyment nor the poor for suffering; He commends the latter to the protection of the former, imposing the duty of charity upon the

one and resignation upon the other. Riches are a debt contracted towards indigence, and for this reason the rich man who closes his purse and his door against the poor man is a vile robber !

Almost weeping himself, Miguel continued asking the child the cause of his grief. At this moment the watchman came up, and the boy, yielding to their united instances, told them that a man had bought one of his precious lottery tickets with the false coin he held in his hand, and that he dare not go home with it for fear of being dreadfully beaten by his father.

Miguel gave a sigh of relief, for could he not wipe away those tears and bring joy once more to that young heart ?

He sent the watchman to the nearest tavern to change the two-dollar piece—all that remained to him of his month's allowance—for two silver coins, and giving one to the boy, he put the other into his waistcoat pocket. Surprised and delighted, the child followed Miguel some distance with exclamations of gratitude ; but our hero, recovering his air of bravado and strongmindedness, went on his way, pretending



MIGUEL GAVE A SIGH OF RELIEF.

*See page 142.*



a disdain and indifference which he was far from feeling.

His head, still aching from the heavy atmosphere of the gambling-room, was in a whirl of confused ideas, which he could hardly define. He saw before him the heaps of gold on the roulette table, and also the sorrowful face of that little child, now smiling at him through its tears, like a star peeping out from among the clouds ; he saw the fatal hook drawing in, one by one, his gold pieces, and he saw too the dirty little hand of the boy holding tight the precious coin that saved him from cruel blows. The voices of the gamblers cursing their ill-luck still rung in his ears ; but again and again the voice of the poor child now echoed back, like sweet music : “ May God reward you, sir ! ” At one moment he felt half angry, at the next inclined to cry.

In this state of mind Miguel reached the tavern of the gipsy, the tipsy voice of whom seemed to him more disagreeable than ever, and the noisy jokes of the company there assembled absolutely insupportable. Annoyed and bored, he soon left the place and bent his steps home-

wards, feeling all the while an aching void ; an anguish of soul which tormented him cruelly without his being able to guess the cause.

“ What can be the matter with me ? ” he kept asking himself.

But his reason, obscured by a life of sin, could not answer him then that it was his nobler sentiments awakening at the tears of a child and, struggling to break through the wire of passion which had buried him, were groaning to be free, chafing and fretting to escape as good does from evil, as that which is refined and noble does from all that is coarse and low, as all that is pure and heavenly does from what is vile and earthly.

It was now past midnight, and in the dark, silent streets no one was to be seen ; but on turning round a corner near his lodgings Miguel felt himself suddenly seized by two thieves, and while one of them threatened him with a huge dagger, the other tried to relieve him of his watch and money.

Miguel, who was strong and courageous, struggled violently, and succeeded in throwing off both his assailants, and, drawing out his

revolver, rapidly fired after them. One of the men fled at the detonation, but the other, furious at being baffled, rushed back upon him and stabbed at him with the dagger. The steel blade made a grating noise as though breaking against something, and Miguel felt a strong blow at his waist, which at the time he could not account for.

The sound of the shot had quickly brought the watchmen to the spot, and they immediately examined our hero to see if he were wounded. The point of the dagger had come in contact with the crown-piece left from the gold coin which Miguel had changed when he gave the alms to the boy, and remained embedded therein, but opposing, fortunately, a stout resistance, otherwise the young man would have been killed at once.

“What a lucky chance!” exclaimed the watchmen as they inspected the pierced dollar by the light of their lanterns.

But Miguel saw therein the finger of God. Miguel, whose mind and heart had suddenly awakened, wept tears of true gratitude and repentance, the aurora of an efficacious conversion, which did not make either a hermit of him or

even a Trappist it is true, but it made him what God willed him to be—a good Christian—and in time he became an excellent husband and father. Yes, Miguel wept, and from the bottom of his heart he murmured : “ Blessed, blessed a thousand times, be the merciful Providence of my God ! ”

## V

This was the story which Miguel’s excellent mother desired him to relate to me ; and I, hearing it from his own lips, could not help exclaiming :

“ Happy is that son for whom a loving mother prays ! ”



## I

AT the close of a beautiful day in May, 1869, a man of advanced years was journeying along the rocky road that leads from Xerez to Puerto Santa Maria on the Spanish coast.

He was driving a donkey on which was seated a middle-aged woman, who was weeping bitterly. Her head was covered with the bright kerchief worn by Catalan peasants, and with its corners she kept wiping away her tears. The same grief, repressed, but perhaps on that account more terrible, might have been read on the face of the man; he walked along with bent head, twirling in his hands the stick with which he drove the donkey, and at times a bitter tear

ran down his cheek and fell upon his beard, white with age or sorrow. Then, as if to conceal his grief he would give a smart blow to the donkey, saying sharply : “ Gee up, lazy-bones ! you walk like people in a procession.” At this the beast would prick up its ears and quicken its step ; but in a few minutes it would return to its slow march, with drooping ears, which it twitched from time to time, and lowered its head, as though it shared the melancholy of its owners. For a long time they journeyed on in silence, until the man, in the weary tones of one who seeks to hide some great trouble by speaking of indifferent things, pointed to a garden off the roadside planted with melons and tomatoes, and said :

“ How thriving Juan Pita’s cucumber and melon beds look ! ”

The woman did not raise her head or answer a word, as though anything but her own sad thoughts were void of interest to her. Just then a man carrying two large baskets of tomatoes came out from a hut above the melon beds and, jumping the ditch that separated the orchard from the road, stopped before our travellers. It was Juan Pita himself.

“ The Lord guard you and your companion, Señor Miguel !” he exclaimed with a bow.

“ Hullo, Juan !” answered Miguel. “ Are you going to Puerto ?”

“ No, señor ; I am going to Xerez to sell these tomatoes, which will be the first in the market.”

“ Well, I can’t say as much, for those in my orchard will get eaten up by the soldiers.”

“ But mine are early ones, and I shall sell them well to rich folks that must have the first of the season.”

“ And how much will you ask for them ?”

“ Well, for these that are still greenish five-pence, and the others that are nice and ripe tenpence.”

“ What ! tenpence for those tomatoes that are only fit to fatten pigs ? It seems to me, Juan, that you are not troubled with a tender conscience.”

“ Well, I must make a little money, Señor Miguel. With the price of my tomatoes this year I mean to get a donkey.”

“ I wouldn’t have a donkey on my conscience.”

“ Oh, those are your pious scruples, Señor

Miguel. Before I took to gardening I was a clerk, and learnt to reckon and calculate in more ways than one." And Juan Pita smiled knowingly and pointed over his left shoulder.

"Isn't that true, Señora Joaquina?" he added. "Why, you sit there as silent as a post, and as pompous-looking on your donkey as if you were in a picture."

Joaquina turned her head, and Juan then remarked the expression of deep grief depicted on her face.

"Zounds!" he exclaimed, stopping short before her, "what is the matter with you? Your eyes are as red as my best tomatoes!"

Joaquina's tears burst forth anew, and Miguel was silent again.

"But what ever has happened, Señor Miguel?" Juan Pita asked.

"What should have happened?" broke out Joaquina at last, between her sobs. "Why, my darling Perico, my eldest son, has been drawn for a soldier, and to-day they are taking him to Cadiz!"

"The Lord bless us, señora! And I knew nothing about it," responded Juan mournfully.

“My son, my dear son!” continued the woman, weeping. “Never did I think that he would have to leave his home and roam over the world. Such a delicate boy as he is, and such care as I always took of him! God bless him and save him! This will be the death of him, and I shall never see him again!”

“Don’t talk like that, wife; it’s tempting Providence. The lad has more wits than a mule!” exclaimed Miguel abruptly. And turning to Juan Pita he added: “You see, my wife has got it into her head that something must happen to the boy, and she has been fretting for weeks over this affair, and making him apprehensive too.”

“Hold your tongue now, Miguel,” replied Joaquina. “You know very well that I am right, only you keep your thoughts and troubles to yourself. Ah! what a bitter cup we have to drink in our old age!” the unhappy woman went on lamenting. “What will become of us without our Perico, who is our support and comfort?”

“Come now, Señora Joaquina; it is not so bad as all that!” said Juan Pita. “Ever since

Adam sinned, men have had to serve the King, and they came back all the same for that ; and between whiles you've still got your son Roch, who is a strong, healthy lad."

A sad smile parted the lips of Miguel, and gave to his contracted features a still more sorrowful expression.

"Roch !" he murmured bitterly. "No one's troubles but his own will ever move him !"

"That's another thorn in my poor heart !" exclaimed Joaquina in grief and anger at the same time ; "the dislike you have, Miguel, for your son Roch, and the hard looks and rough words you always give him."

"It is not dislike, wife," gravely answered Miguel ; "but my fatherly affection does not blind me. I can see that that lad has a bad heart."

"My poor boy !" sighed Joaquina. "What would he do without his mother. I love them both alike ; I have no preferences."

"Neither have I ; but I know well what each is worth. Would you believe, Juan, that that hard-hearted Roch never took on a bit when he heard that his brother had to go for a soldier ?

He never shed a tear when he saw him leave his home, and, instead of coming with his mother and me to see him off and bid him good-bye, he stayed at home cool as a cucumber, lying on the bench at the door asleep in the shade."

"But, husband, was he to leave the house and the orchard all alone?" replied Joaquina, who, like all mothers, ever tried to excuse the faults of her children.

"He knows well how to do that when it is to go amusing himself in the town, where he has learnt too much roguery. I tell you, the lad has a bad heart, Joaquina, and he will cause us many tears yet."

The mother was silent, as though she understood the truth of her husband's remarks. The latter took a red cotton handkerchief from his pocket, lifted his hat, and pretended to wipe his brow, but in reality it was to wipe the tears that started to his eyes.

"Gee up now, Molinera! Gee up; we shall soon have night upon us," he said, urging on the donkey.

Meanwhile, Juan Pita—either because he found himself in the uncomfortable position

which a third person always feels between those who are absorbed in their own grief, or with the innate delicacy that feels when a conversation has taken a turn where any listener becomes an intruder—profiting by the silence which followed Miguel's observation, took his leave, and went a short cut towards Xerez, where he hoped to sell his stock of tomatoes.

The unhappy parents continued their way in silence; no sound was heard but those of the footsteps of Miguel and Molinera, and a half-suppressed sob now and then from Joaquina, or the occasional tinkling of goats' bells, and in the distance the voice of Juan Pita singing as he went along, with the indifference so general in those who have no troubles towards those whose hearts are full of sadness.

Miguel and Joaquina journeyed on thus, and passed without notice the two tall columns called "las Cruces," placed on either side of the road, and which serve to mark the first league from Xerez to Puerto. From this spot a path branched off, which Molinera instinctively took. It crossed an arid moor, covered with wild herbs and thorny bushes, among which some old black walls were

visible, like an enormous skeleton rising from a grave. It was the tomb that time had made for the great Castle of Sidueñas. This was once an imposing fortress with eight large towers. It is generally believed that the Queen of Castille, Doña Blanca de Bourbon, came there to weep over the contempt and neglect of her lord, Don Pedro the Cruel ; and that, by the orders of the latter, she was there poisoned by Juan Perez de Rebolledo, the King's mace-bearer, Trigo Ortis de Zuniga, the first keeper of the royal prisoner, having nobly refused to commit the crime. To-day, thanks to some lover of historic treasures, a portion of the ruined walls has been restored, the famous tower of Doña Blanca rising high above the moor like a monument upon the tomb of a hero. Not even a garland of ivy adorns it ; severe and haughty, it crowns its brow with turrets, and wears above its portals the arms of Castille and Aragon under the coronet of a Marquess, for from this place the Marquesses of Castilla del Valle de Sidueñas derive their title.

On the borders of this lonely barren moor, four flourishing orchards had been planted, one of which was named Alcaide. In this, under the

shade of a group of poplars, was a spring of sweet water, called by the country people *La Piedad*, which, compassionate and generous as the name implies, sent forth one small rivulet to water the fruit-gardens, another to follow the road leading to Puerto Santa Maria. The latter stopped before a ruined hermitage, as if in reverence for fallen greatness or to weep over the ruins made by man, and indignant at Christian neglect; then it continued slowly on its way, leaving the hermitage alone with its ruined walls, its doorless and roofless chapel, and its belfry from which both cross and bell had been torn.

## II

Seven years had nearly elapsed since Miguel and Joaquina had rented the orchard of Alcaide, with the tower of Doña Blanca as the farmhouse attached to it.

Miguel cultivated the orchard, aided by his sons, Perico and Roch, who regularly went to sell the fruit and other garden produce in the market-place of Xerez.

Perico, the elder, possessed that confiding,

open-hearted nature which seems natural in youth, that happy age when the heart is filled with joy and gladness, and the countenance lit up with smiles.

Loving his parents with almost exaggerated affection—if exaggeration were possible in the holy obligation of filial love—his delight was to procure them every comfort and gratification in his power, and his greatest happiness was to see them calm and contented, enjoying the rest due to their advancing years.

Roch, on the contrary, was full of that selfishness which is repulsive in mature age as a vice, but which shocks and grieves in the young as something alien to their nature; and of envy, which always presupposes a perverse, narrow mind—high-minded and noble characters may be rivals without being envious—that gave a tinge of bitter sarcasm to his disposition. He was ambitious, even in the narrow circle of ideas and circumstances in which he moved; for our modern revolutionists, in making the poor their instruments, have taken from them that blessed conformity to the laws of Providence which religion and the charity of the rich had hitherto

maintained in their souls, and which gave them fortitude and patience in their poverty and hope in all their afflictions.

Unhappy poor, why do you foolishly cast away the balsam that would cure your wounds? Unhappy rich, who know not how to ward off the storm, the first thunders of which are sounding in the distance, and whose lightnings have already begun to burn and destroy! . . .

Like all ambitious and envious men, be they gentle or simple, Roch had no other confidant of his secret schemes and projects than himself, for mistrust always precedes and accompanies ambition.

Miguel's life of honourable work, though poor, was peaceful. He divided his affection between his wife and children, and lived in deep content. But when Perico had attained the age of twenty, the calm and happy monotony of the family life was interrupted by that dread that drives sleep from many a mother's eyes, that black cloud that settles every year over the homes of rich and poor alike, but which the money of the former will dispel, and the latter must accept—the conscription.

Perico, in whom was centred all their hopes,

the model son of devoted parents, was forced to take his turn at the urn, and, alas ! drew an unlucky number.

In vain did the unhappy youth try to appear calm, and to console his afflicted parents. He who needs consolation cannot easily console others. The grief of those three loving hearts was the source of mutual tears, augmented and intensified by the cold indifference of Roch, who was never in the least disturbed by his neighbour's sorrows and troubles. The violence of his grief made Perico even more affectionate and expansive. His brother, on the contrary, received the parting embrace of the poor conscript without a word of regret or affection ; it was only when he saw him disappear in company with his parents that he called out brutally : “ Don't be in a hurry to come back ; wait till you're a grandfather ! ”

The railway station on the day of the departure of the conscripts presented one of those spectacles which move a charitable heart to tears—tears which bring no remedy, yet offer consolation and sympathy ; for is it not a blessed thing to mourn with those that mourn ?

Each conscript was accompanied by either father, mother, sister, or sweetheart; on every side resounded the lamentations of those who were so soon to be separated, mingled with words of encouragement, advice, and consolation, and protestations of eternal love and remembrance. As though love were never succeeded by indifference and forgetfulness ! . . .

The word most frequently repeated on all sides was that word which is rarely uttered without tears; that word which, between those who love, never expresses joy because it always presents the idea of separation—farewell! that word reserved for times of grief and sadness, of parting and desolation—farewell! How many of those poor conscripts had said it for the last time to their aged parents!

Seated in a corner of a third-class waiting-room, Perico was holding his mother's hand tightly in his own, while she, with the other, kept wiping the tears that ran down her prematurely wrinkled cheeks. Miguel stood before them with his son's poor bundle of clothes in his hands; notwithstanding his efforts to show more fortitude than his wife, a great tear and a deep sigh from time

to time betrayed his grief. Joaquina had just hung a scapular of Our Lady over the shoulders of her son, and, as it contrasted with the yellow colour of his recruit's jacket, it seemed to shine like a star of hope and comfort in their tribulation, and as a pledge of help and succour in their distress.

“Come, mother, don't be afraid ; I shall get on all right ; three years will soon slip away,” said poor Perico, trying to smile, though his eyes kept filling with tears.

“Three whole years without seeing thee ! How can I help feeling afraid ? Who will comfort me ? Who will help me to bear this trial meanwhile ? Who will assure me that I shall see thee return as I have seen thee go ? Holy Mother, what will become of my son ?”

“She will take care of him and watch over him, wife. Don't take on so ; crying won't remedy it,” replied Miguel.

“Yes, yes, I leave him to her holy keeping ; all my trust is in the Queen of Heaven !” devoutly sighed the poor mother. “Pray to her often, my darling boy ; she is the refuge of the poor and of the afflicted.”

The bell announcing the approaching departure of the train at last sounded, causing so many hearts to beat with different emotions; the doors were opened, and a crowd of friends and relatives followed the conscripts on to the platform, where tears began to flow faster, while lamentations and cries of farewell rent the air. Joaquina looked at the train as it waited but for a few moments to take up its fresh load—snorting like a tired monster, yet ready to start again on its wild career—and wishing she had the strength to detain it, she clutched her son convulsively by the arm; but time is up, and he must go. They are closing the carriage-doors, and calling to all to hurry to their seats. The poor mother released her son from her embrace as she cried: “My son, my darling boy, farewell!” His father, weeping like a child, then embraced him, and as he did so he secretly slipped a little sum of money into his pocket. This he had hoarded up in his paternal tenderness and solicitude by dint of many privations and labours.

The second bell rang, and Perico, with a breaking heart, was forced to mount before the

train began to move. Joaquina, in her eagerness to kiss him once more, mounted the foot-board and clung to the door, and was thrown backwards as the train moved on. She had seen him for a few moments longer; the rest mattered not. . . .

### III

Roch, seated on a broken millstone, was teaching various tricks to a dog, whose ears and tail he had cut from sheer love of inflicting pain.

“Here comes the Monarchy,” he was saying as he held up his stick. And the dog barked and ran from side to side furiously, as though seeking something to attack.

“Here comes the Republic,” said Roch, lowering the stick. Then the animal ran frisking round him, licked his hand, and laid himself quietly at his feet.

There was an expression of daring independence and insolence on the lad’s face, and he had a brutal rudeness of manners; this was the outcome of the former, in the same way as a hateful sneer seems ever on the countenances of those who

lead lives of refined profligacy. As he sat leaning against the wall, his hat thrown back and his unbuttoned waistcoat showing his slovenly habits, and tormenting his unfortunate dog, he might have belonged to a family of gipsies who were discussing the comforts of life and the nothingness of human greatness as they encamped round their miserable caravan among the ruins of the Castle of Sidueña.

Joaquina was sitting in the doorway, picking the seeds off some ears of maize, and she could not help smiling sadly as she watched Roch's stupid interest in the tricks of the dog.

"How wrapped up you are in that little animal, lad!" she said at last. "If you don't take care, you will begin to bark soon, and get a tail too, perhaps."

"Well, I should be a son of yours all the same."

"Yes; and when you were a little one I was proud of you, but since you have grown up and become an idle scapegrace, you are only a trouble to me."

"What do I care? I just do what pleases me."

"As you make your bed, so you will lie on it,"

continued the patient mother. "It's a shame for you, all the same, to be idling the hours away like that, while your father is working like a negro in the orchard."

"What does he want to work for, then? If he chooses to kill himself, I can't help it."

"In a poor man's home people must work or starve; we have many to keep, but he is alone to work. It is your duty to help him."

"If he wants me to work for him, he had better go to the workhouse; they'll keep him there."

"Hold your insolent tongue! He that speaks thus of his father will go to the dogs! You learn that among your bad companions, no doubt. They will be your ruin, Roch, if you don't give them up."

"I shall just do as I please; it doesn't matter to you what friends I have or where I go."

"It matters a great deal to me; while you live under our roof and eat our bread, we have a right to warn you, and you are bound to obey."

"There, let me alone, and put your tongue in your pocket," answered Roch, with the contemptuous disdain and look of superiority that

belong to the emancipated youths of large cities, and which evil spirit is, alas ! spreading even to the villages.

“ Be off with you, son of Cain ! Wicked sons come to a bad end ! ” said Miguel, who had come up and heard Roch’s last speech.

“ Oh, there’s going to be a sermon now ! Preach away, father ; it will go in at one ear and out at the other,” retorted Roch, as he turned his back on his parents ; and to vex his mother still more, he walked off singing : “ I’m a Republican ! Hurrah for the Republicans ! The Republic for me ! ”

The poor mother went on with her work in silence, while the tears ran slowly down her cheeks. The coarse, rude selfishness of Roch was continually bringing them to her eyes ; and as the memory of a loved one is a source of perpetual sorrow when he is no more, or when he is far away, so her grief increased when she compared the bad conduct of Roch with that of her loving Perico.

“ He will come back to me ! ” she whispered ; and the hope comforted and sustained her.

Absorbed in these painful reflections, Joaquina

had not noticed a tall, bony man come hurriedly up the hill and stop just before her.

“Health and fraternity!” he called out bluntly.

“Gracious goodness!” exclaimed Joaquina with a start, “what a fright you gave me!”

“Am I so ugly that the sight of me frightens you?” replied the newcomer.

“Just as true is it that you’ve only got to show your nose to startle honest folk, as it is that the hiccup can be stopped by a sudden start.”

Joaquina was not exaggerating; the man wore the look of a clown dressed up in a frock-coat. He was a thorough type of Socialist agitators—propagators of light who only darken the intelligence of the people they deceive for their own aggrandisement.

That vulgar, stupid-looking face; those squinting eyes, that seemed to turn inwards at times as though practising the *nosce teipsum* of the Ancients; that long, dirty coat, like a Roman toga; that red, green, and white necktie—the colours of the Republic; and, above all, the tremendous stick on which he leant with the same air of security as a peaceful citizen leaning upon “the rights of the individual”—portrayed

exactly the federal orator who does not expose his views and arguments, but imposes them upon his ignorant hearers. He was the friend of Roch whom the mother dreaded ; the Mephistopheles who imbued him with dangerous ideas, who persuaded him to rob his father of his hard earnings "for the country's cause," which earnings entered his own deep pockets like stones in a well, never to return.

It was not surprising, therefore, that Joaquina should have received his visit much as she would that of his Satanic majesty.

"What evil wind has brought you here again, with your hungry-looking necktie?" she said.

"The good of the country," answered the man in a pompous tone.

"Well, you won't find it here ; we can do very well without the benefits you would get us."

"Madam," exclaimed the Socialist impatiently, "stop your foolish talk, and tell me where to find your son Roch ; it is he I came to see."

"Roch has gone to the town to sell some fruit, and he won't be back till night," replied Joaquina, with the ready lie of a diplomatist.

“ Well, I’ll wait for him, even till to-morrow.”

“ Wait, then, sitting or standing, just as you please.” And Joaquina rose from her seat in vexation, and went to drive her hens and chickens into their house.

Meanwhile, the man walked up and down before the old tower, looking in every direction, and stopping at every sound, in his anxiety for the youth’s return. As he did so, it chanced that his eyes fell upon a marble slab above the gateway with this inscription : “ The love of his ancestors and the memory of their great deeds impelled the present Marquess to undertake the restoration of this historic monument.”

“ Oh, vanity of the rich, whom I despise ! Not a stone of these walls will I leave one upon the other !” exclaimed he, parodying the hatred and proud boasting of the revengeful Medea.

But his enthusiasm was cut short by a mocking laugh from Joaquina, who was just passing.

“ Don’t come here making fun of me !” he cried angrily.

“ I was only thinking that you are like the fox and the sour grapes. Why didn’t he eat

them? Because he couldn't get at them. Talk away, but you are not the master yet."

"Why shouldn't I stick up a coat of arms over my door too?" continued the man, pretending not to listen to her. And, shaking out his shabby, greasy coat, he added: "But these noble rags that cover me are worth far more than all their pompous titles."

"With your decorations included, I suppose!" retorted the irrepressible woman, pointing to a round piece of cardboard which the Socialist wore on his breast.

This object, which was meant to represent a medal, was inscribed on the back with the words, "18th of September," and on the outside, "Long live the sovereign people." It was hung by a narrow ribbon round his neck, and worn with all the pride of a veteran.

"Yes, madam, with my decorations included," he answered furiously. "This medal is a monument to me, and will ever remind me of the glorious revolution and of the people's heroism."

"How fine, to be sure!" replied Joaquina sarcastically. "Well, you'd better take an

umbrella with you always, or the first heavy shower will destroy your monument."

"No matter if it were destroyed; I am here to uphold its doctrines."

"Then go and preach them in some old farm where there are no people."

"When I speak, madam, I can do as I like with the people; they flock to hear me."

"Why don't you get yourself a new frock-coat, and send that old gown to the rag-shop?"

The indignant pedant was about to reply again, but he was stopped by the arrival of Roch, who was carrying a basket full of beans, and followed by a flock of turkeys that kept pecking at the basket.

"Ah, Roch, my son!" shouted his friend, hurrying towards him, "now let us cry 'Hurrah for the Republic!'"

"Cluck! cluck! cluck!" cried the turkeys, startled at the man's shouts.

"Comrade, the very fowls are joining in our chorus!" remarked Roch, as he went with his leader to a seat behind the house.

Joaquina watched them with alarm as they began to talk in low tones and with much anima-

tion. She followed them cautiously, and hid herself, at first behind a heap of straw, and then behind a broken cart, very near where they were sitting. As she listened unobserved she saw Roch raise his hands, as if horrified at what the Socialist was saying; while the latter, by his gestures and manner, seemed to be persuading the youth to do something repugnant to his feelings; and she also caught the words, "The people's cause," "country," "the despotism of the rich," "division of riches,"

"And if they send a bullet into me?" answered Roch to his arguments.

The poor mother felt a chill of horror, as if, indeed, that bullet had penetrated the heart of her perverse son, as she saw him at last yield to the persuasions of his leader, and heard the man say :

"Well, then, you will bring your father's gun and your own too?"

"Yes," answered Roch, with bent head and rather gloomily, as though some grave pre-occupation disturbed his mind; and he said "Good-night," and went off to a hut in the orchard where he slept.

Joaquina dared not betray her presence and detain him ; she went into the house, and looked immediately in the place where her husband always hung his gun. It was not there. Miguel never took it out with him ; therefore Roch must have got it. An uneasy curiosity made the poor woman walk in and out of the house without any fixed purpose ; she sat down at last on the doorstep with her head in her hands, and tried to think. Her imagination, excited by uncertainty, filled her heart with dread and fear.

The sun was now setting, and before long the moon and stars appeared ; as the shadows advanced the poor mother's anguish increased.

Miguel came in from his work, serious and taciturn as usual, ate his supper, and went to bed.

When all was quiet, Joaquina went to the orchard, and crossed rapidly and silently to the spot where Roch had his hut. There was a light burning ; Molinera, the donkey, was lying on her bed of dried weeds in an adjoining stable ; and there, seated on a turned-up basket, was Roch, carefully cleaning and oiling the guns.

## IV

“What are you doing up and busy at this hour of the night?” suddenly exclaimed his mother, as she entered the hut.

Roch started to his feet in alarm, letting the weapon fall from his hands, and replied in a tone of surprise and anger :

“What is that to you? What do you want here?”

“Por Maria santissima! tell me what all this means,” asked Joaquina anxiously, kicking the fallen gun.

“Go away from here, woman, or you’ll make me do something desperate!”

“I won’t go away; I’ll stay here!” cried the unhappy woman, seating herself on the basket that her son had risen from.

Without another word Roch caught her by the arm, and pushed her roughly out of the hut.

“Scoundrel! scoundrel!” she groaned; “I will fetch your father to you!”

“Go and fetch him; I can manage you both!” answered the wretch, shaking his fist at her.

“My God! my God!” murmured the poor mother, as she fled from the spot.

Miguel, who was sound asleep, did not perceive the absence of his wife, nor did he hear her re-enter the room and lie down upon the bed. She was too uneasy to undress, and grief and dread kept sleep from her eyes. The first hours of the night went slowly by, leaving fresh wrinkles on her brow and new wounds in her heart. The thought of this unknown danger, which she could not avert, tortured her beyond measure.

All at once she started up in bed so violently that she woke her husband in a fright; her listening ears had caught the sound of retreating footsteps and the distant howling of Roch's dog.

“What is the matter with you, wife, that you can't stay quiet ten minutes?” asked Miguel.

Poor Joaquina lay down again without answering, but you might have heard the violent beating of her heart, so great was her grief and anxiety concerning her unworthy son.

Miguel was soon fast asleep again, and Joaquina got up once more and crept quietly to the outer door. As she undid the bolts she heard her husband move, and the unhappy woman had to

stay there quietly until he was still again, suffering meanwhile the most cruel anguish.

At last she crept out ; the night was dark and black as an evil conscience, and, stumbling over plants and bushes, she flew to Roch's hut in the orchard. The light was still burning, but the place was vacant.

" Roch ! Roch !" called the poor mother in subdued tones, straining her eyes all round the hut.

No answer came ; in the silence of the night no sound was audible but the rustle of a falling leaf which the wind made a plaything of.

" Holy Mother ! what has become of him ?" she exclaimed, as she ran round the orchard. " Holy Virgin of Miracles, accompany him, do not abandon him !" And again she called " Roch ! Roch !"

" Roch ! Roch !" repeated the echo, like a lament.

Joaquina then ran to the road, on as far as the old columns, calling her son ; she returned to the hut ; from thence she went to the hermitage, then again upon the road ; and still the same cruel silence and uncertainty. And thus she

continued until dawn, her anguish and anxiety giving her strength and courage.

Worn out at last, she returned to the house, and laid herself again upon the bed where Miguel was still sleeping. The thought came to her anxious mind to awake him and get help in her affliction ; but whether it was pity for the poor old man, or that her maternal heart could not bring itself to accuse her ungrateful son, she had the fortitude to suffer alone, and to wait until her husband had risen and gone away to his work.

She then flew to the highroad once more, and went towards Xerez ; several women and children, pale and frightened, were coming from the city ; some were carrying their beds or clothing, others the more necessary articles of household furniture.

Joaquina inquired of them the cause of their flight, and learnt that on the previous day the troops had been fighting with the revolutionists ; the firing had been suspended during the night, but at dawn it had recommenced. The women told her also that a regiment had arrived from Cadiz, and at that moment they were fighting with the people.

“ Alas ! alas ! my Perico is there ! ” cried the wretched mother. “ My sons, my two sons, face to face ! ” she kept repeating, as she ran like a mad woman to Xerez. She knew now that Roch must be at the barricades.

Quick as lightning she ran up the hill of San Telmo, and hurried on to the place where the struggle was at its height. On turning a street, her steps were arrested by a barricade ; several peasants occupied it, some bringing ammunition, others carting stones and tearing up the pavement, while the rest were standing with their guns to their shoulders, ready to fire.

“ What brings you here, woman ? ” said one, pushing her aside.

“ My sons ! Where are my sons ? ” was all she could say. Obligated to return, the poor creature endeavoured to get back to the barricade by another street. The inhabitants of the houses, who from half-open doors or shutters were watching the fighting, looked with wonder upon that breathless woman, as with bare head and streaming eyes she crossed the streets, heedless of the troops and fearless of the bullets. They knew not that she was a mother.

All at once a woman's voice screamed out :  
“ Joaquina !”

The unhappy mother stopped for a moment and looked about her, but, recognizing no one, she continued her career until she was pulled out from the crowd by a friendly hand. It was that of the woman who had called her name.

“ Where can you be going, my good soul ?” she exclaimed. “ You'll get a bullet into you !”

“ My sons ! Take me to my sons !” murmured Joaquina, as, unable to utter another word, she stretched out her hand towards the place where the firing was loudest.

“ Yes, that is what they are for !” shrieked the other woman vehemently. “ Oh, that they had died at their birth, or that we had never lived to see them grow to manhood !”

Other persons, meanwhile, had come out of the house and surrounded Joaquina, who had sunk upon a heap of stones and was weeping disconsolately. “ Come in here, madam ; don't stay out there tempting Providence !” they were saying.

“ I cannot rest until I find them,” she groaned.  
“ The bullets that are meant for them must first

pass through my body !” And, following the vehement impulse of her grief, which blinded her reason, she tore herself away from the arms that held her.

One of the women had a little fruit-shed at the corner of the market-place, closed since the beginning of the outbreak, and she gave the key to Joaquina, advising her to get in there out of danger, and to watch to see if she could discover either of her sons. Thither she ran, while the other women wept and lamented over her with the contagious sympathy of one mother bewailing the misfortunes of another.

The little shop was only about twenty yards from one of the barricades which had been erected across the principal street ; on the outer side were the troops, and on the inner the citizens and peasants. The door had been forced open, the counter broken, and all its contents overturned or destroyed ; almost the only thing intact was an engraving of the Blessed Virgin nailed to the wall. Joaquina fixed her suppliant gaze upon it, imploring the aid of the Mother of Sorrows in this her hour of dire distress ; her face now wore that expression of deep grief which,



AT THE SAME INSTANT A SHOT.

*See page 186.*



when tears and cries and sobs are exhausted, concentrates itself in the heart, and there corrodes and tortures in silence when restrained by Christian resignation ; but if impious despair bursts the flood-gates, it overflows like a torrent of burning lava, destroying everything that opposes its path.

The poor woman closed and fastened the door as the firing recommenced, and, looking through a hole, she saw the combatants wrapped in a cloud of smoke, crossing and recrossing like fantastic shadows where the fight was thickest ; the noise of the guns and shouts of the men made her tremble as the conflict grew fiercer.

The troops were at last victorious, and the barricade was taken ; many of the civilians fled, leaving the arms that marked them as rebels ; others stood firm, waiting to resist the soldiers hand to hand. Fainting with fear and horror as she heard the firing come nearer and nearer, Joaquina closed the tiny shutter through which she had been watching the awful scene, and let herself fall helpless to the ground. Presently the sound of firing, the curses of the combatants, the groans of the wounded, and even the heavy

thud of the bodies as they fell to the ground, were distinctly audible; two bullets, one after another, pierced the frail door, and buried themselves in the wall opposite.

“Roch!” suddenly cried the voice of one who seemed to be begging for life.

Joaquina sprang to her feet, pale and rigid as a corpse.

“Roch! Roch! For God’s sake, don’t fire!” cried the voice again in greater anguish still.

At the same instant a shot was fired close to the door; a shriek, the noise of a body falling, and the grating of steel resounded in the ears of that unhappy mother.

Joaquina tore open wide the door.

Great God! Perico, her beloved son, was lying dead upon the threshold with a dagger in his breast and a bullet in his heart. There, standing before him, was Roch. In his left hand he held the still smoking gun; his right was wet with his brother’s blood.

On seeing his mother, he started back and his guilty hand left the stain of blood upon his forehead.

“ Cain ! Cain ! It is written on thy brow !” shrieked Joaquina, with the horrible energy of a mother cursing a reprobate son, with the terrible anguish of a mother who sees before her one son a wounded corpse, and the other a fratricide.



“ I will bless all those places where an image of my Heart is kept.”—*Words of Our Lord to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque.*

## I

A FEW years ago an Italian diplomatist related to the writer the following curious case. A certain sceptical foreigner—celebrated, too, in more senses than one—was visiting the Eternal City. Conversing one day with a Roman Cardinal, he mentioned his incredulity concerning the canonization of the Saints, censuring what he considered the culpable facility with which the Catholic Church approves the infinite number of miracles attributed to them.

"Have you ever read a process of canonization?" asked the Cardinal.

"I have never even seen one," was the reply.

"Well, then, read the one which I will send you," continued his Eminence, smiling.

A few hours later the critic received a voluminous folio, which he read with avidity. On returning it to the Cardinal, he wrote:

"If all the processes of canonization are conducted like this one, I have no further difficulty in believing in the genuine virtues of the Saints, or in the truth of their miracles."

The Cardinal wrote in reply:

"The process of canonization that seems so satisfactory to you did not equally satisfy the Catholic Church. It was rejected twelve years ago."

This example is true of all unbelievers; their state is one of pride and ignorance. When the former is humbled the latter is vanquished, and the bright light of faith will shine in the sceptic's soul, unless, indeed, his negations be dictated by malice. Unfortunately, malice and bad faith are the characteristic features of dangerous unbelievers. Some are such by profession—

unbelievers who proclaim aloud their principles because modern philosophy teaches them that religious belief is synonymous with stupidity, instead of its being, as we believers maintain, a proof of soundness of mind and judgment. This class is composed partly of those numerous fools who imagine they increase their intellectual stature by their scepticism, and partly of those equally numerous libertines who boldly deny all dogma, all morality, all miracles, that rebuke their vices or check their ambition. With the first set of men, "I don't believe" is equivalent to "I do not understand"; with the second, "I do not believe" means "It does not suit me to believe," or "I fear to believe." Both classes together form the rank and file, the rabble, of impiety.

It is not this class of sceptic, however, which is the most dangerous. There are other unbelievers who may be termed the "aristocracy of impiety"—the scientific, serious men of their army. These never join in the noisy outcry of the mob, who find the idea of a personal God too antiquated for our age of progress and enlightenment. They, on the contrary, have taken Him

under their protection ; they have re-established His throne of glory, which musty superstition was undermining ; and, with truly human munificence, they have allowed Him Angels to honour Him with the music of their golden harps, and even thunder and lightning for His amusement. They have done more. Jealous of the dignity of the God who condescends to feed the birds of the air and to clothe the lilies of the field, they have framed for Him a constitution which overthrows that old and modest régime called Providence. According to these theorists, God no longer intervenes in the things of this world. Reclining on the wings of the seraphim, He counts the stars in the Milky Way, while these restorers of His honour proclaim in college and university the “ Constitutional God ” of sensible men, enemies of superstition, and—oh, zeal of the House of God that eats them up !—“ for the good of religion and all rational belief, abandon to scorn the absurd miracles which are authorized, either through ignorance or weakness, by the Catholic Church, who in other respects is a loving Mother and worthy of all esteem.” So spoke a great academician in a speech which

overthrows the sharp remark of a witty author : “ Fools differ from men of talent in this : the former talk absurdities, while the latter act them.” Here is, then, a man of talent—for, being an academician, one must naturally suppose such—uttering the most absurd and contradictory arguments. For the public ridicule to which this submissive son of the Church would hold up the miracles which his spiritual Mother approves is malicious in thought and ignorant in speech ; it is a kind of *enfant terrible* that exposes the upright, pious, and holy intentions of this “ protector of religion and rational belief.” He, in his great wisdom, has discovered ignorance and weakness in the conduct of the Church.

It is difficult to imagine that such calumny can spring from good faith ; but, taking that for granted, his great love for this holy and infallible Mother causes him to draw down upon her public scorn, simply and solely through kindness for the good of the Faith of which she is the sole depository.

What are we to conclude ? Our only conclusion is this : that, notwithstanding his deep Oriental studies, our academician has not learnt

the beautiful Arabian proverb : “ When a stain appears on a rich carpet of Stamboul, the wise man covers it with his mantle ; the fool points it out with his finger.”

We can only suppose that in searching the Scriptures our critic never remarked that the two good sons of Noah covered his shame ; he who exposed and made fun of it was Cham the cursed. This might surely be enough ; it is not necessary, in order to reveal his motives, that this loving son of Holy Church, who calumniates and scoffs at his Mother, should add the following phrase to his speech : “ No modern wonder-worker has ever shown me a dead man brought to life ; when he brings me one, I will believe in his miracles.”

Ah, Sir Academician, if one were to rise from the grave and knock at your door, the news that he might bring for you from the eternal dwellings would, perhaps, be anything but agreeable !

## II

And yet the dead do rise to life in the light of this nineteenth century, just as they rose by the rays of the Roman lamps in the Church of the Catacombs. We ourselves have seen one rise from his bier at the bidding of some mysterious voice. The first act of his awakening intelligence was to recognize his Heavenly Father ; the first impulse of his heart was to cast himself into His paternal arms. If we had not already been believers, we should have become so. This is the story we are about to relate—not, indeed, to the protectors of the “ Constitutional ” God of men of common sense, but to partisans of the old system, who allow God to weigh and measure the actions of men ; to the humble, who are fed upon faith ; to the simple, so ready to believe because they are incapable of falsehood ; to the lovers of the Sacred Heart, whose souls expand and rejoice at seeing how faithfully Our Lord keeps the promise that serves as an epilogue to these lines.

At first sight Philip—the hero of our story—appeared to belong to the ordinary class of young

men, but his character, when studied attentively, proved to be of an original type, rarely met with in youth. A lover of sport, an indefatigable dancer in fashionable circles, familiar with drawing-room intrigues and theatrical gossip, he seemed to be one of the many frivolous youths whom pleasure enslaves with chains of flowers. Nevertheless, the passions proper to youth were not the only ones that held captive this mind of no ordinary mould. Above all and before all, that other passion, which Scripture calls “putredo ossium,” was rooted therein—an insatiable ambition, more general in men of riper years.

At the age of twenty-two, when I made his acquaintance, Philip had already his fixed projects for the future. He had always an object in view, and with cool calculation and profound reserve—making everything subservient to his egotism—he went straight towards it, with the slow activity of prudence and the tenacious constancy of an iron will, which does not consist in repeating always the same acts, but in directing them all to the same end. His natural talent, his polished manners, and, above all, his pre-

cocious knowledge of men, due to a natural gift of keen observation rarely met with in men of his age, made his path easy. To him both men and things were as so many chessmen, which he moved backwards and forwards according as they favoured his game; a simple visit, a waltz, an invitation made or accepted, were with Philip the result of reflection and prevision. There was one thing only that he never reflected upon: that he possessed an immortal soul.

In September, 187—, a lady friend of our hero, Widow Z——, arrived in Madrid, and he hastened to pay her his respects.

This lady had just returned from England, and she brought a message from the nuns of the Sacred Heart in Brighton to the Superioress of the same order at Chamartin, close to Madrid. She begged Philip to accompany her to the convent. This he gladly consented to do, for he remembered that one of the pupils in the boarding-school was the daughter of a nobleman whose patronage he was anxious to secure, and he saw in this visit a favourable opportunity of ingratiating himself with the father by showing

attention and politeness to the daughter. Philip had never come in contact with a nun ; when the Superioress therefore made her appearance in the reception-room he fixed his eyes upon her with great curiosity. Her stately, but withal modest, bearing and the graceful ease with which she bowed to her guests, an air of refinement impossible to escape the notice of so keen an observer as Philip, made him say to himself directly, even before she spoke, “ She is a perfect lady at any rate.”

He was not, however, a man to judge by appearances ; for though the nun spoke both Spanish and French with a perfect accent, and saluted her visitors with the dignity and grace of an Infanta, Philip looked for something more than all this under that religious garb, and he found it. He found a serene gravity such as he had only seen in sacred pictures—an ingenuous affability that commanded respect ; a something which, in spite of his sagacity, he was unable to define, but which was simply the aroma of the virtues that adorned her soul.

“ I have no doubt she is a Saint,” thought Philip, and, seized with bashfulness for the first

time in his life, he dared not ask to see the daughter of his friend.

The Superioress invited her visitors to inspect the convent-school, and related the story of its foundation. The religious of the Sacred Heart had commissioned a friend to negotiate the purchase of the house from the Duke of Pastrana, to whom it belonged. This nobleman refused to sell the property; but later on when he heard who were the would-be purchasers and the use they intended to make of the house, he replied that he persisted in refusing to sell, but that he would willingly make the nuns a present of it.

Napoleon the First had lodged here in 1808, when the indomitable energy of the inhabitants of Madrid opposed his entrance into their city.

Before taking leave of Philip and his lady friend, the nun offered the latter some pictures and medals, and to the former a scapular of the Sacred Heart. Philip accepted the little gift, and pressed it to his lips mechanically; then, opening his elegant russia-leather pocket-book, he placed it among some visiting-cards and

letters that emitted a strong perfume of patchouli. The nun smiled sadly on observing his vanity and worldliness, and bade him adieu.

### III

Two years passed by without producing any change in Philip. The present satisfied, and the future smiled upon him ; his life of intrigue and pleasure absorbed his whole being. His ambition increased in proportion as his first hopes became realized. The immediate object of his dreams was to recover the title of Count which had formerly belonged to his family ; but to obtain this it was necessary to pay the arrears of fine and duty, and the small revenue of the ambitious young man was quite inadequate for such expenditure. To obviate this difficulty, Philip had secured the confidence of a certain politician—a newly created Count—and, with the intention of pressing forward the negotiations, he determined to spend the spring in the populous town of X——, where this important personage was staying. The latter was one of those vulgar men whom the prevision of others more saga-

cious raises to high posts in order that they may serve as a screen to their low intrigues. Philip, who always found in the weaknesses of others powerful aids to attaining his own ends, had studied the weak points in the Count's character, and in a short time had gained his confidence.

He set out, therefore, for X——, taking with him a strange object for a man of his stamp—the little scapular of the Sacred Heart. It had passed into letter-cases of all shapes and sizes, but had never left Philip's pocket since the day he had received it from the Superioress. For that man who never murmured a prayer, that man who never raised his thoughts to Heaven, and who could not understand why this bright world should be called a valley of tears, nevertheless could not bring himself to cast aside the image of his Saviour's Sacred Heart, though the flames that burst from it did not set his cold heart on fire, and whose precious blood he virtually despised. God alone knew the reason why he thus kept it on his person.

One night Philip went to the theatre to hear Gounod's famous opera "Faust." The diva was

doing wonders ; no one had ever interpreted with sweeter *fiorituras* or more intricate vocalization the rôle of Goethe's heroine.

Hundreds of souls redeemed by the blood of Christ were throwing flowers and jewels at the feet of that frivolous woman, whose merit consisted in making vice appear attractive and immorality delightful.

Philip was no appreciator of music, but it was correct to appear so, and after bursting his gloves with applauding and making himself hoarse with shouting "encore !" he went up to the box of his friend, the brand-new Count, at the end of the third act. The enthusiasm there was indescribable. The young Countess had just thrown a bouquet of early violets, in which she had placed a diamond ring, at the feet of the diva. Even the grave old Count had relaxed his frown of self-importance, and, evoking his reminiscences of musical knowledge, exclaimed in the height of his enthusiasm : "That voice is as soft and mellow as——" But here his Excellency stopped short, the muse refusing any further inspiration. The Countess, a placid matron who went to sleep during the andantes,

and woke up for the allegros, had contented herself with giving a nod of approval now and then.

“Philip!” screamed the young Countess the moment he entered the box, “have you ever heard anything to equal her? What a voice! What an artiste! What vocalization! And—what a lovely dress! That low square bodice is ‘une gracieuse création’—that will set the fashion this season. . . . What a pity that merit and talent such as hers is not recognized in Spain!”

“Excuse me, Mariquita,” interrupted Philip, “such an ovation as she has received here to-night the diva will rarely meet with elsewhere, I think.”

“It is not half enough!” screamed the enthusiastic young lady. “We must make her a royal gift if we do not wish the civilized world to laugh at us! The set of diamonds that Bribonini had presented to her in Paris on the night of her benefit cost two thousand pounds! We must open a subscription at once. . . . Papa, you must head the list with a hundred pounds, and mamma must follow with another hun-

dred. . . .” At this, the Count knit his brows as though the peace of Europe were threatened, and the Countess roused herself so effectually that sleep fled from her eyes for the rest of the evening.

“ Oh, you are both going to refuse, of course !” rattled on the daughter, pouting like a spoilt child. “ What is a paltry sum of a hundred pounds ? Aren’t you soon to be a minister, papa ?”

The Count smiled with the serene majesty of Jupiter Olympus, and thus encouraged, the girl continued :

“ That voice is worth all the gold in the world ; and since money is spent on other things, why not on this ? Why, mamma gave five pounds, and I one, yesterday, for some charity merely. Yes, it must be done. Let us open the subscription at once. . . . Papa a hundred pounds, mamma a hundred, and I will give the twenty that papa gave me for my birthday. . . . Philip, you must give another twenty at least. Come, give me your pocket-book ; I will make the list myself. . . .”

Bedinned with all this chatter, Philip took

out his pocket-book, and was handing it mechanically to the young lady, when he suddenly remembered that it contained the scapular of the Sacred Heart. Quick as thought, and with the dexterity of a conjurer, he took it out before giving her the pocket - book. Then, letting it fall unobserved, he pushed it with his foot under one of the seats. He feared the mockery of the indevout and brainless girl if she should perceive a scapular in the pocket-book of so fashionable a young man as himself ; he dreaded, above all, lest the foolish ignorance and perverse ideas of the Count should be alarmed if he saw him the possessor of that pious emblem, at which the reactionary party scoffed and sneered. Spite of these fears, however, he had no sooner trodden the little scapular under his feet than a feeling of shame and disgust came over him. It seemed as though he had become a traitor to his best friend. " I will pick it up again," he thought. But though he tried several times to do so, he did not succeed ; for in his hurry, he could not distinguish the little piece of red stuff from the patterns on the carpet.

## IV

At the end of the last act Philip was obliged to offer his arm to the Countess and conduct her to her carriage. He had no sooner seen it drive off than he re-entered the theatre, which now, dark and deserted, presented the aspect of the soul when the brilliant phantoms of temptation have vanished and left it alone in the darkness of sin.

Philip went up to the box, and by the light of several matches searched all the corners for his scapular, but in vain. The long trains of those worldly women had no doubt swept away the sacred image of the Heart of the Saviour.

Vexed and grieved, Philip returned to the hotel where he was staying.

The salutary impression did not last long, however; for although our hero was far from being frivolous, his heart was too full of the weeds of worldliness for the lily of a holy thought to flourish there. The remembrance of his lost scapular had, nevertheless, often come into his mind. "Who will give me another?" he would then say, with a tinge of sadness in his tone.

One evening, according to custom, Philip went down to dinner at the table d'hôte. To an observant mind like his, the continual movement and change proper to large hotels was quite a study. That multitude of types differing in sex, in age, in class, and in language, offered a wide field for his observation. But it had never occurred to him to compare that constant traffic with the equally constant traffic of human life. Man arrives at the gate of life as a traveller, he rests awhile, pays what is due, and departs never to return ! Philip, however, never made this reflection.

His daily *vis-à-vis* at table was a rich North American lady who was travelling through Europe. Mrs. W—— was a zealous and devout Catholic, somewhat advanced in years, but whose white hair betokened experience and commanded respect. One of those acquaintanceships so frequently formed in hotel life soon sprung up between this lady and our hero.

On the evening in question, Mrs. W——, who was to leave on the morrow, invited Philip to take tea in her rooms. Not wishing to be rude, the latter consented ; but he took leave

of the old lady as soon as good breeding would permit, in order to hurry to the theatre, where the Count had arranged to meet him.

Mrs. W—— accompanied him to the door of her apartments, and offering him a sealed envelope, said: "I am leaving you a little memento, which I hope you will keep and value."

Philip, impatient to keep his appointment, rushed up to his room grumbling at the polite attentions of good Mrs. W——, and throwing the envelope on a table without even looking at it, he rapidly changed his dress and hurried off to the theatre.

The Count was anxiously expecting him. He had that morning received a letter from a cabinet minister, charging him with a mission quite beyond his mean capacity, and he hoped to find aid and secrecy in the talent of Philip. The minister added in a postscript that the affair concerning our hero's ancient title was one of but little difficulty, that by a slight irregularity he would soon be in possession of it without expense. The Count naturally began by reading the postscript, and ended by proposing

Philip's co-operation in the business that concerned himself. The young man showed no eagerness to accept, for, cool and sagacious as ever, he had immediately remarked his present advantageous position, and resolved to profit by it. Quite taken by surprise, the inexperienced politician found himself obliged to accede to all Philip's demands, and the contract was at last agreed to, with protestations of paternal friendship on the part of the elder man, and of generous disinterestedness on that of the younger.

At twelve o'clock the latter returned to his hotel more pleased and satisfied than he had ever been. His hands in his pocket, he walked home humming the air of "*Desdemona*" that he had just heard at the theatre, and bearing on his head the immortal pitcher of the milk-maid that men will never cease breaking.

On entering his room, he lit a candle that was on the table, and there at its side he noticed the envelope given him by the American lady three hours before.

Moved by curiosity, he tore open the envelope, and to his utter surprise saw a scapular exactly like the one he had lost. Red as a



OFFERING HIM A SEALED ENVELOPE.



stain of blood, the heart stood out in relief, on the strip of white cloth, and under it the same inscription met his gaze: "Cease; the Heart of Jesus is here!"

Philip stood for a moment voiceless and motionless; then, little by little, his heart beat faster and his breast heaved, and a tremendous sob, resembling the roar of a wounded lion, burst from his lips. Presently he fell on his knees, pressing the little scapular between his trembling fingers, and hiding his face in an arm-chair. A sharp pain pierced his heart, and a sensation of anguish came up into his throat as though he were choking. Philip thought he was going to die, and between his pressed lips he groaned: "Not now, my God, not now! Give me only one hour longer!"

Hour after hour slipped by, yet that immense pain kept revolving in Philip's bosom, seeking like an encaged beast to escape; only now and then he uttered short, hoarse sobs, without tears, dry, like thunder without clouds or rain. At last, however, a flood of tears burst from his eyes and relieved his oppressed bosom. Then the waves of bitterness gradually subsided and gave

place to a more peaceful grief, though it was deep as the sea in its calmest moments. Memory brought to his mind the innumerable sins of his life, reflection made him see their great enormity ; but his will—man's queen and mistress, so daring for evil and so feeble for good—his cowardly will was all but failing him.

“ I cannot ! I cannot ! ” groaned the unhappy youth. “ For me, pardon is impossible ! . . . ”

The worm of remorse, taking in his conscience the proportions of a viper, was killing the sweet and holy virtue of hope in that poor soul.

At this moment his imagination distinctly represented to him a resplendent heart surrounded by a crown of thorns. It had a large wound in the upper part, not in the lower, as is usually represented, from which burst forth flames. A bright-winged butterfly seemed to be flying round and round those flames, and at last it disappeared within the open wound, drawn in and consumed by that divine charity. Then a vivid light shone in his understanding, and Philip understood that the sinner is the vile worm, repentance the cocoon in which it

encloses itself, and holy pardon the beautiful wings that elevate the soul, even to the Heart of the Saviour. Down in the depths of his soul he seemed to hear those touching words of the Prodigal Son, which he yet had never heard or read: "Surgam et ibo ad patrem meum—I will arise and go to my father! . . ."

And Philip did arise. The day was now beginning to dawn. It found him still in evening dress, his scented kid gloves on his hands, and a bunch of violets, that the Count's daughter had given him, still in the buttonhole of his coat. All this he hastened to change for a simple morning suit, and then directed his steps to the Cathedral.

The vast temple was empty, but the rosy light of the dawn penetrating the eastern windows lent to the majestic roof that tint of sublime solemnity which makes us involuntarily bend the knee, and brings spontaneously to our lips the praises of God.

Philip knelt down close to an empty confessional. A statue of Our Lady of Sorrows, with a sword piercing her heart, happened to be before him.

“It is I who have wounded thee thus, O Blessed Lady!” he exclaimed in bitter sorrow. “How can I call thee Mother? Nevertheless, Mother, Mother! I call upon thee, I implore thy intercession!”

After some time the comforting tears began to flow and relieved his oppressed bosom. It seemed, as he invoked the Blessed Mother of God, that she promised him pardon, even before that pardon was secured by holy absolution.

In a few minutes a priest appeared in one of the aisles. Philip rose immediately and begged him to hear his confession. The former was about to excuse himself, but on remarking the young man’s anxious look and the expression of grief and anguish upon his face, he bowed a silent assent and entered the confessional.

Philip knelt at his feet and made a general confession of his whole life.

The confessor was amazed at such profound sorrow, such an efficacious purpose of amendment, and he could not refrain from asking tenderly :

“What moved you to come to confession, my son?”

“The sight of this little scapular,” replied Philip, showing it all wet with his tears.

“Had you any reverence for it? Did you practise any devotion connected with it?”

“No, none whatever! I merely carried it on my person. Once, alas! I threw it away, but it came to seek me again, spite of my ingratitude.”

“Our Lord has wonderfully and faithfully fulfilled His promise!” exclaimed the priest, raising his hands to heaven in thanksgiving; “‘I will bless those places where an image of My Heart is found.’”

\* \* \* \* \*

Two years after this event, Philip died in a foreign land. Looking at death face to face as the threshold of eternal life, he died the death of the just.

Among his frequent conversations with the religious who nursed him in his illness, he related the preceding story, which can be fully verified with exact dates and the names of well-known persons.

## V

And is this a resurrection from the dead ? Yes ! It is the resurrection of a dead soul : a miracle far surpassing that of raising a dead body ; for, if the latter requires the intervention of God's Almighty Power, the former necessitates all His power and all His mercy too.

No physiologist can explain this phenomenon. It is beyond the comprehension of psychologists, and the most profound observer of the human heart can never understand it. At times the reading of a good book ; the Word of God heard in a church ; death, that warns us with its terrible memento ; regret, awakened by the remembrance that this earth is not our true country ; disappointment and deception, which poison our earthly joys ; each and all may seem to those who never penetrate beneath the surface the natural causes of those marvellous changes of the heart that converted Saul the Persecutor into Paul the Great Apostle, and Mary the Sinner into the Penitent Magdalen.

But that a man who lives in utter forgetfulness of God and his soul, enslaved by all the

passions of youth, and at the same time by an insatiable ambition—perhaps the most dangerous passion of riper years—that a man, whom the present caresses and whose future smiles with fair promises, should suddenly renounce all his pleasures and schemes of aggrandizement and embrace austere penance, should stifle in himself his former vices and practice all the virtues, only because he finds a scapular in an envelope—this is a more than human prodigy ! It is because the voice that cried to Lazarus in his tomb “ *Exi foras !*” has sounded too in the ears of the dead soul, and this is what it said : “ Believe, for it is I who speak to thee ; I, thy God ! Hope, for I, thy Saviour, am alone thy hope and refuge. Love, for I have first loved thee. Live, for I, thy Father—the God Who willeth not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live—will that thou shouldst live for Me only !”

Thus, and thus only, can be explained why that invisible Lazarus should rise from the tomb of vice and, cleansed and purified, cast himself at the feet of Jesus Christ.

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